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*Poetry, Politics and Pornography*

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### *Notes on Contributors*

JOHN SIMON's collection of film criticism, *Private Screenings,* was published by Macmillan last Autumn.

A. D. HOPE,* perhaps Australia's best-known poet, is Professor of English at the Australian National University, Canberra. . . . NORMAN TALBOT,* a lecturer in English at the University of Newcastle, N. S. W., is currently visiting in the United States. . . . W. HART-SMITH* is a conchologist who has had species of shells named after him. He lives in Sydney and has published numerous volumes of verse. . . . CHARLES HIGHAM, a film historian as well as a poet, lives in Sydney and has three books on the cinema coming out within the next two years. Our particular thanks go to Mr. Higham for his assistance in assembling this group of Australian poems.

FRANÇOIS BONDY* is a noted French critic and man of letters, and an editor of *Preuves,* in which his essay originally appeared. His review of André Malraux's *Antimémoires* will appear in our next issue.

JOHN LOGAN is now teaching in the English Department of the State University of New York, Buffalo.

JON ANDERSON's* first volume of poetry, *Looking for Jonathan,* will be published in late Spring by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

PATRICIA LOW* was recently awarded the Ralph L. Collins Memorial Fellowship to the 1967 Indiana University Writers' Conference.

THOMAS P. WOLFE* is in the English Department at Rutgers University. His essay in this issue is his first published work.

*(continued on page 663)*

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# Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir:

I was delighted to find myself praised by Roger Sale,[1] and with such eloquence and extravagance too, for what I would most hope to be praised for, that is, for being large-minded and resisting the sordidity of modern Eng Lit. But the poor young man, I soon found, has been so corrupted by his education that he can achieve this only at moments. He finds there is a paltry side to Empson; naturally enough, as he has been taught to expect it in all mankind. It is my happy duty to relieve him here, and I am sorry my answer has had to be delayed. Empson is pure where he stands accused; the consequences of the Fall are to be found only among his traducers. Surely this will admit a gleam of sunlight into the Calvinist underworld.

I am very bad at correcting proofs of my own writing, always seeing what I meant to write and considering whether it should be improved, and in my first book *(Ambiguity,* 1930) I foolishly imitated Hazlitt in what seemed a civilised practice, making incidental quotations as I remembered them, which was sufficient for the purpose. The effect of the combination was that a close study of an odd bit of punctuation in a poem would sometimes appear with the punctuation wrong, and nearby there were evidently careless quotations. My paragraph would make nonsense until the punctuation was put right, and I struggled to do this as soon as possible, but my opponents were already saying that I had cheated; I had misquoted the text in order to make it fit my interpretation, they said, and they have continued to do so. Now, in dealing with a long poem, I can see, one might be tempted to fudge a detail to fit an overall interpretation; but here I was dealing almost entirely with short lyrics. I was keen on explaining why they were so beautiful, and of course I was not interested in faking the text; almost any other form of our mortal frailty would then have tempted me more. And what I had written about the text did not apply to the erroneous version which had got printed. For years I have sometimes looked up the facts about these accusations, and they would always seem to me such obvious lies that I need not refute them. It has cured me of feeling any great reverence for textual scholars.

The next mortal insult given me by Mr. Sale, a body blow, is intended by him as generous praise. He likes my not being such a fool as to believe in history, but just cracking jokes about it, like a real artist. An entirely disproportionate amount of harm was done to the American mind by the tour of Oscar Wilde in his costume, recommending the "aesthetic" opinions he had derived from the French, the silliest whites in Europe; I felt sure that a photograph must survive of Oscar Wilde in his costume meeting the chief citizens of St. Louis,

[1] "The Achievement of William Empson," THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1966).

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*New*

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including a pale small T. S. Eliot dressed as Little Lord Fauntleroy, as was the custom of the period—the dates happen to make this social event impossible, but it retains a symbolic truth. T. S. Eliot as a young man was deliciously impudent, and this was recognised as charming; when English critics said he was trying to destroy English poetry, and at any rate Ezra Pound did oppose the ten-syllable line upon which it has been mainly based for at least six hundred years, he wrote an article saying that *he* was the real tradition and it took great labour, sometimes, to acquire. A history of some sort had to be fubbed up to support his "tradition," but was sure to fall down at a touch. When I returned to England from communist China in 1952 I was frequently told that I obviously didn't know any history, so I have had to look into the evidence for the opinions I was taught at school, and I found every time that they stand up like a rock. Of course a lot of professional historians became neo-historians to suit this fashion, but they are getting a bit ashamed of it. The Whig Interpretation of History is the correct one, and it is remarkable that the book given that title offers no single reason to think otherwise, being merely a fashion report of some High Table giggles. Anything I print about the past, ignorant as I know myself to be, is intended as real truth about the past which I think worth fighting over.

The really black thing against me in the article is practically an insult to Old Glory, but while touching my cap I must try to put my case. You understand, my British colleagues have accepted nearly all the American literary revolution, and like you can hardly believe that anyone doesn't, but on its political side the line is harder for them to toe. Roger Sale says that I made a deliberately unfair aside in my book *Milton's God* about Adams' book *Ikon,* as a retaliation because he had exposed a lot of misquotations in my book *Pastoral.* My mind was then, when I wrote the sentence for my book, and is now when I defend it, concerned with advising Americans on a matter which I think urgently needs their attention. The village cracker-barrel, granting whatever merit it had in its place, gives them no help at all when they consider politics anywhere else, for example Cromwell's Commonwealth or modern Vietnam. Adams had written that he could not regard Milton as

> the frustrated anarchist, ignorant of his premises and terrified of his conclusions (which is the basic picture of Milton the liberal)

—so he is confident, we gather, that Milton must have been a sturdy Anglican Royalist like T. S. Eliot, though of course quite uninterested in politics. The most impressive fact about Milton, I think, is that three weeks before Charles II landed at Dover (when it was already certain that he would land) Milton printed a second edition of his "Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth," telling the English to break England up into city states like ancient Greece, so that the King would have nothing to take over. This meant almost

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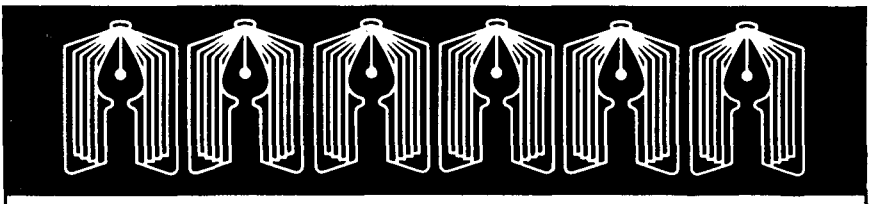

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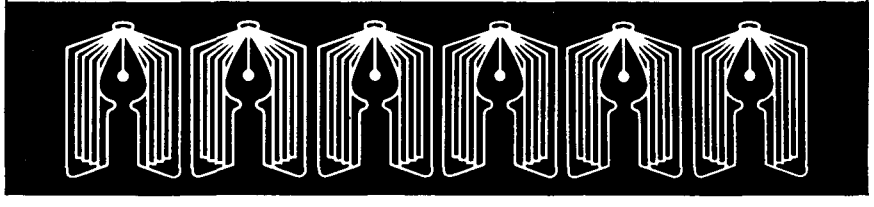


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certain death by torture for Milton, who only escaped it by accident. Adams has clearly been brought up not to know the basic facts about the matter, but I did not single him out there; I said "like most Englishmen, I never know what Americans mean by a Liberal," and I said again, at the end of a brief tirade about this absurdity from Adams, that this kind of political confusion haunts American literary critics. I could list a series of such remarks by various Americans. It is true that Adams had listed some misquotations of mine in an article, and had insinuated that I had misquoted on purpose; but he was entirely justified in making corrections, and the insinuation I have had time to become accustomed to. With entire purity, my mind was shocked, when I read this wisecrack in Adams' book; the academic attitude to (say) Milton seems to me an impudent confidence that they can twist him into something usable to stop the kids from going Red. I am the more confident that I was right when I meet this loyal chorus from my American critics: "He's sore, d'you see, on account of he's been shown up."

The basic problems before Eng Lit in our two countries are much the same. Gross misuses of it for political and sectarian purposes are bound to crop up, and might destroy it; but with periodic sanitary efforts it can probably be got to continue in a sturdy, placid way, as is needed.

WILLIAM EMPSON

*London, England*

Dear Sir:

As we sit here, deep in our Calvinist dungeons, terrified of Ho Chi Minh and constantly mindful of the deep pit of darkness in which womanish and fearful mankind lives, it is reassuring of Mr. Empson to tell us that his, at least, is another voyage. Some time ago, and with bated breath, I sent an offprint of my article to Mr. Empson along with a letter which quoted George Eliot to the effect that even Milton must submit to having the facial angle of a bumpkin were he to see his portrait in a spoon. Because I could hope to be nothing more than a spoon-manufacturer, I hastened to add my hope that he would not take offense. Among the many pleasures Mr. Empson's letter has given me, not the least among them is the knowledge that he did not.

I too have a secret belief that the Whig Interpretation of History is nowhere near as bad as is sometimes made out. I do not see, however, how anyone who comes close to sharing my respect for the soundness and sanity of *Some Versions of Pastoral* could allow the Whig Interpretation to be called "the correct one."

ROGER SALE

*Seattle, Washington*

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Dear Sir:

Like most bystanders, I intervene here at the hazard of my head, mostly to enter demurrers to Mr. Empson's two charges. I did not accuse Mr. Empson of faking his texts to prove his point, and deeply regret that he has chosen to misinterpret me this way. I said his syntax was often deliberately indistinct because I couldn't conceive of an analyst of ambiguity unintentionally using pronouns with two possible references. But I may well have been wrong here; much more is possible than I supposed a dozen years ago, and if the syntax of *Pastoral* was simply careless, that makes my point as well as it needs to be made. As for the erroneous citations, my examples showed clearly that many were pointless—slipshod indeed for an analyst of poetic texture, but by no means deliberately misleading, because leading nowhere.

Stranger yet is Mr. Empson's mistaking my view of Milton in the civil war: I am a neo-Marxist, not a high Anglican, and how anybody could confuse one position with the other I don't know. I wouldn't want to propose that Mr. Empson look over the last chapter of my little book on Milton (the one boldly titled "Conclusion"); but the very sentence from which he quotes the last half might, if looked at in its entirety, do something to set him right. I was trying, if not successfully, at least hard, to steer a middle course between the Anglican Tory Milton who accidentally consorted with regicides, and the apostle of universal liberty who just happened to exclude Papists from toleration and proposed a permanent Grand Council not subject to electoral recall. Because I tried to dodge Mr. Empson's Scylla, he now imputes to me a passion for Mr. C. S. Lewis's Charybdis. In good old seventeenth-century phrase, I beseech him by the bowels of Christ to think it possible that he may be mistaken.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

*Ithaca, New York*

* * *

Dear Sir:

The Department of English of Washington State University wishes to announce the publication of a *Poe Newsletter* beginning in 1968. We are looking for short essays and notes on any aspect of Poe the man and the writer. Bibliographical studies, source and influence studies, and short essays and notes on Poe in the context of international Romanticism are especially desired. The first issues will be distributed free to scholars and libraries upon request. Write to the Editor, *Poe Newsletter,* Department of English, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington, 99163.

G. R. THOMPSON
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*Pullman, Washington*

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JOHN SIMON

# Abuse of Privilege: Lowell as Translator

TWO CONCEPTS OF TRANSLATION HAVE FLOURISHED in the western world. One, which we can call medieval (it earned Chaucer the title "great translatour"), consists of taking a story or poem by a "maker" in some foreign language and retelling it freely in your native tongue. The other, which we can call Renaissance, consists of transposing a piece of writing as faithfully as can be, word for word, into the other language. Except in the drama, it is the Renaissance mode of translating that has prevailed.[1] The explanation is not far to seek.

In the Middle Ages, for religious and political reasons, the concept of individualism was not highly developed. Writers were not particularly concerned with asserting their total originality. Culture was more truly international and there was a certain common stock of tales in prose and verse—the "matter" of Troy, for example—which poets considered their duty and privilege to pass on. With the rise in importance of the poet as individual, and with style becoming accordingly co-equal in status with content, respect for one's own individuality made one as different and original as possible in one's writing, whereas respect for another's individuality kept one as true as possible to his manner and matter in one's translating.

What Robert Lowell has done in his poetic translations, which he calls "imitations," is to return to the medieval mode: to retell a poem as though it came from some communal stock of plots or *topoi* in his own terms. One difficulty with this is immediately apparent. The medieval poet drew on stories that were vaguely but widely known, and his hearers or readers expected both a certain fidelity to and a certain variation on the themes. This poet-translator was dealing with stories in verse, and long story poems lend themselves to such "retelling": more or less following an out-

[1] Renaissance translations were, to be sure, often very free by today's standards; nevertheless it is in them that respect for original authorship begins.

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line while improving on some particular, embellishing a detail. But when poetry becomes predominantly lyrical and highly personalized, there is no story line to cleave to: everything is in the imagery, prosody, diction, sound. You render these—to the extent that you are able—or you render nothing.

Lowell's most important body of translations is the volume *Imitations;* let us begin by examining one of the pieces in it, a version of Rilke's famous "Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes," whose title Lowell renders as "Orpheus, Eurydice and Hermes." Already by changing the quaint punctuation and adding the conjunction, Lowell loses the archaic, epigraphic quality Rilke is after. *"Das war der Seelen wunderliches Bergwerk,"* ("That was the wondrous mine of souls") Rilke begins; and Lowell: "That's the strange regalia of souls." Three things are clear at once. Lowell will not abide by the blank verse of the original, but will turn it into free verse; he will translate into a colloquial tone ("that's") antipodal to the austere elegance of the original; and he will change the imagery—*Bergwerk* ("mine") becomes, inexplicably, "regalia." The mineralogical image, souls in Hades that go like silver ores through the dark (and Rilke's line is all silvery i's and short e's—*"Wie stille Silbererze gingen sie"*), becomes sartorial: "regalia" made out of "platinum filaments." Poorer as this is in evoking the underground kingdom, it becomes confused as well: the filaments suddenly turn into what they are in the German, "arteries." But whereas metallic ores can be turned into arteries easily enough, especially in German where *Adern* means both veins and ores, the transition from garments to veins is unworkable. Rilke's image progresses from these veins to the underground blood that feeds the veins of living men. Lowell obtrudes with irrelevant references to powder beetles, otters, and an oak king, thus interrupting the flow of both the blood and Rilke's imagery.

Now Lowell inserts gratuitously, "The dark was heavier than Caesar's foot." What prompts him to stick Caesar's, not to mention his own, foot in it? Perhaps it is free association: *Porphyr* (which he doesn't translate) may suggest to him *porphyrogenetos,* and this, in turn, Caesar. But the result is as clumsy as it is irrelevant. Next, where Rilke is abstract as befits this lifeless realm, and speaks of *"wesenlose Wälder. Brücken über Leeres"* ("disembodied forests. Bridges over emptiness"), Lowell substitutes

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"distracted forests"—interesting, but what could it mean here?—and "bridges over air-pockets," which is too specific and more in keeping with the overworld of Pan-Am than with the underworld of Pluto. Where Rilke's lake hangs over its distant bottom like rainy skies over a landscape, Lowell's "moaned over the background canals,/ like a bag of winds over the Caucasus." It is hard to see how a lake could be suspended over canals, and background ones at that; moreover, by making the lake moan, Lowell dispels the ghostly silence that hovers over this landscape. Even more perplexing is the presence here of that "bag of winds over the Caucasus," which I can explain only as Lowell's proleptic or prophetic reference to his then unwritten adaptation of *Prometheus Bound*. Where Rilke has "meadows, mellow and full of forbearance (*Langmut*)," Lowell has "terraced highlands, stocked with cattle and patience," which, quite absurdly, implies husbandry in Hades. Again, where Rilke's road is "laid out like a long paleness," which is appropriately mortuary, Lowell's is "unwinding like a bandage," which is merely out of the infirmary. Lowell is, apparently, mindful of the practical schoolboy precept that good writing is full of concrete, specific references and avoids abstractions (e.g., "paleness"); no less apparently, there are exceptions to this rule, exceptions that are called for here.

Rilke's Orpheus, *"der stumm und ungeduldig vor sich aussah"* ("who, silent and impatient, looked ahead"), undergoes a sad change: "he didn't say a thing. He counted his toes." Not only is this trivial and jocular without being original or funny, it is also preposterously inappropriate: why would—and how could—a man hurrying impatiently toward the world of the living and the return of his wife count his toes as he speeds ahead? The rest of the strophe is not without its minor inaccuracies, such as "His step ate up the road/ a yard at a time, without bruising a thistle," where Rilke has "Without chewing, his step devoured the path in great mouthfuls." Lowell's metaphor is mixed.

Then, however, Lowell mangles one of Rilke's finest images. Orpheus's senses are cleft in two: his gaze runs ahead like a dog, turns, comes back, and time and again stands waiting out there at the next turning (*"vorauslief/ umkehrte, kam und immer wieder weit/ und wartend an der nächsten Wendung stand"*—the rhythm, enjambment, and alliteration are noteworthy), while his

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hearing lingers on, like a scent, trailing backward toward her whom he must not look at. But what Lowell has "cut in two" is the "intelligence," so that the conflict of riven senses gets lost. Next, "gaze" becomes "outlook"—too abstract; and, worst of all, this outlook "worried like a dog behind him." The point is now good and killed: the gaze must look forward by Pluto's stipulation, also it is eager to get home and, like an impatient dog that finds its master too slow, it keeps running ahead. But when you have this dog "worrying" something (a bone?) and getting "behind" Orpheus, the image is ruined: sight is now permitted to stay behind at times and thus is not fully cut off from hearing. And when this hearing "breathed myrrh behind him" instead of simply "staying behind" as in Rilke (who pushes the prefix graphically all the way back: *"blieb sein Gehör wie ein Geruch zurück"*), the confusion is compounded.

The rest of the strophe in translation continues the diminution of the original. Thus Lowell's Orpheus has behind him "the currents of air in his blue cloak," rather less effective than the terse *"seines Mantels Wind"* ("the wind of his cloak"). At the end of the strophe, Lowell seems plain ignorant of German. How else explain the reduction of "If he dared turn around once . . . he would have to see them, the two quiet ones who silently follow him" (the beauty of the German is chiefly in the assonance: *"die beiden Leisen, die ihm schweigend nachgehn"*) to this prosy bit of garbling: "And as a matter of fact,/ he knew he must now turn to them . . ." etc. On the contrary, Orpheus is trying very hard not to look back. Where I put an ellipsis Rilke has a parenthetic statement, characteristically displaced by Lowell, which drives home Orpheus's aching awareness of the terms of the bargain. If you translate *"müsste er sie sehen"* ("he would have to see them") as Lowell does, "he knew he must now turn to them," the only charitable interpretation is that you do not distinguish this from the indicative *er musste sie sehen,* which would mean "he had to see them." Lowell makes Orpheus irresponsible and weak—especially with that casual "as a matter of fact" dragged in out of nowhere.

I have room here for only a few more of these egregious distortions. Take another Rilkean master-image: Orpheus's passionate lament for Eurydice has created "a world of grieving, in which everything is once again present: woods and valley, and

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path and borough, field and river and beast; and . . . around this grief-world there revolved, exactly as around the other earth, a sun and a starry, still sky, a grief-sky with disfigured stars . . ." Lowell imitates as follows: "out of this sorrow came/ the fountainhead of the world: valleys, fields,/ towns, roads . . . acropolis,/ marble quarries, goats, vineyards./ And his sorrow-world circled about her,/ just as the sun and stern stars/ circle the earth—/ a heaven of anxiety ringed by the determined stars . . ." Lowell muddies the clear correspondence of the world and the grief-world (or sorrow-world) created by the songs: "out of this sorrow came the fountainhead of the world" does not identify the replica as Orpheus's grief-stricken poetry. Then, all those specificities—marble quarries, goats, even an anachronistic acropolis—sound more like a tourist folder than Rilke's poem. But the main point here is that in the sorrow-world the phenomena, like the stars, are *entstellt* (disfigured, contorted with pain), something completely muffed by Lowell's epithet "determined." Previously, he gave us "stern stars," which is good fractured German from *Stern* ("star") but hardly conveys Rilke's beautiful *"gestirnter stiller Himmel,"* let alone the loveliness of the real world as opposed to its distorted mirror image in Orpheus's dirges.[2]

Again, Rilke says that Eurydice is so fulfilled with death that she has no desire to live again. In the text we get: "Like a fruit with sweetness and dark, so was she filled with her great death, which was so new that she fathomed nothing." In Lowell: "Like an apple full of sugar and darkness/ she was full of her decisive death,/ so green she couldn't bite into it." Plainly if death fills her with sugar like a ripe apple, that death cannot also be green, unripe, and not to be bitten into. Eurydice, next, is revealed in the "new maidenhood" of death, which Lowell's "marble maidenhead," for all its alliteration and funerary overtones, does not properly identify. Her sex "was shut, like a young flower toward evening," which Lowell mistranslates "Her sex had a closed house/ like a young flower rebuking the night air." That "closed house" is awkward enough, but "rebuking the night air" must be based on sheer unawareness that *gegen* means "toward" as well as "against." On the other hand, setting up an inapposite con-

[2] Punning translations like this one probably derive from Ezra Pound, about whose influence on Lowell see below.

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flict between the flower and the night air might also be a bit of that characteristic Lowellian violence (as often the poet's downfall as his achievement) intruding uninvited.

Lowell can as easily become overabstract as overspecific. Thus where Rilke says, simply and concretely, that Eurydice was no longer "that blonde woman who sometimes echoed in the poet's songs," Lowell produces a bloodless abstraction: "that blond transcendence/ so often ornamenting the singer's meters." Rilke continues: "No longer the wide bed's fragrance and island, and that man's possession no longer." Lowell has: "nor a hanging garden in his double bed./ She had wearied of being the hero's one possession." This is a fiasco: who would want to have a hanging garden in his bed, even if it's double? An island in a wide bed is something else again: wide bed suggests ocean bed in which an island is appropriate. Moreover, the beloved's body in a bed, which would otherwise be a place in which to toss shipwrecked, does become a life-saving island. Further, it is wrong to make Orpheus, especially in this context, "the hero," rather than just a man. And Eurydice has not wearied of him; it is just that the magnificence of death is beyond the humble competition of life.

And now consider the end of the poem. In the German, Hermes looks at the backward-glancing Orpheus sorrowfully, and escorts back a Eurydice just as entranced and unconcerned as before, walking "uncertainly, gently, and without impatience." In Lowell, the god looks at Orpheus reproachfully, and "His caduceus was like a shotgun on his shoulder"—a final piece of anachronistic violence that does violence also to the meaning of the poem: it implies the cruelty of the gods, whereas Rilke had in mind merely the incommensurability of life and death.

In his Introduction to *Imitations,* Lowell describes his aims as translator or adapter:

> I have tried to keep something equivalent to the fire and finish of my originals. This has forced me to do considerable rewriting. . . . I have been reckless with literal meaning, and labored hard to get the tone. Most often this has been *a* tone, for *the* tone is something that will always more or less escape transference . . . I have tried to write live English and to do what my authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America.

Except for making one wonder why "a tone" should have re-

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quired such hard labor ("the tone," of course, would) this sounds very fine. But, I am afraid, what Lowell has done with Rilke's poem is neither a decent translation nor a good original work, merely a disaster. Lowell goes on to say, "I believe that poetic translation—I would call it an imitation—must be expert and inspired, and needs at least as much technique, luck and rightness of hand as an original poem." I am not sure I know the difference between technique and rightness of hand, but I can affirm that the foregoing translation is as devoid of them as it is of luck. I cannot escape the feeling that Lowell translates when he is unable to write anything of his own, not so much out of love for the poem translated as out of love for the sound of his own poetic voice. As a result, he rationalizes the admittedly difficult and essentially thankless art of the translator into something grander and even more difficult than it is. In actual fact, a version such as this of "Orpheus" is all the more shocking a failure since Lowell was neither faced with rhyme nor willing to be bound by meter. There are, to be sure, slightly better performances in *Imitations,* but there are also quite a few just as bad. This sort of thing should not be inflicted on great poetry; indeed, it shouldn't happen to doggerel.

For one thing, although Lowell translates from many languages, the only one he admits to not knowing at all is Russian. Yet one is compelled to question his competence in others as well. One would assume him to be most at ease with French, yet he is guilty of howlers even there. Valéry's Helen of Troy (in "Hélène") returns to the world of the living and exclaims, *"Azur! c'est moi. . ."* ("O azure, it is I!") Lowell, clearly mistaking this for *"L'azur, c'est moi,"* translates in his "Helen": "I am the blue!" Still, I suppose one can do good enough work from trots, if one will only abide by them. Yet questioned in connection with his Pasternak imitations whether he knew any Russian, Lowell told the *Paris Review* interviewer, "No, I have rewritten other English translations, and seldom even checked with Russian experts." This does not augur well.

Lest it be assumed that Lowell works better with strict, rhymed forms, let us look at his imitation of Baudelaire's famous sonnet *"Recueillement,"* which he calls "Meditation." Take the rhymes of the octave: care, here, atmosphere, care/ bare, back, bazaar,

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back. Not only are there no feminine rhymes to provide diversity as in Baudelaire, but also the similarity of all the vowel sounds is oppressive. Worse yet is the recurrent use of identities (care—care; back—back), which is aurally distressing. Baudelaire, to be sure, has *ville* and *vile* followed by *servile,* but these are homonyms, which, like *rime riche,* are perfectly in keeping with French prosody. The very first thing that strikes us in the French is the cadence, which sets the mood: *"Sois sage, ô ma Douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille./ Tu réclamais le Soir; il descend; le voici."* Lowell has "Calm down, my Sorrow, we must move with care./ You called for evening; it descends; it's here." In the first verse, Baudelaire makes the two main words the only polysyllables and places one at the end of each hemistich. Lowell has a disyllable in "Sorrow," but nothing to balance it. "Calm down," moreover, is much less affecting than *"Sois sage"* ("behave yourself," but with overtones of "get wise"), and "move with care" suggests some kind of stealthy maneuver, whereas Baudelaire is asking for dignified, stoical endurance. In the second verse, besides effects of vowel coloring that we can hardly expect the translator to get across, there is the dramatic progression from the long first hemistich to the quick staccato of the second; *"le voici,"* without a verb, being even more brusque than *"il descend."* The change from nominative to accusative is particularly effective. Lowell does what comes naturally in his English, which is fair enough, but here only some brilliant piece of strategy could have done the trick.

Baudelaire's crowd which, under the whip of pleasure, *"Va cueillir des remords dans la fête servile,"* becomes one that "fights off anguish at the great bazaar"—no equivalent for gathering remorse at the slavish feast: Baudelaire's crowd is more than a bunch of revelers trying to forget mortality; it is mankind so cursed with a subaltern mentality that its very exaltation is supine, its most longed-for fruit the bitter one of remorse. Now Lowell proceeds to exhibit that lack of a sense of place (or, sometimes, time) that is so frequent in these adaptations. Thus Lowell's regret emerges from the "sea," although the locale is Paris and the waters those of the Seine as the *arche* further implies. But it is the last two lines in which the translation truly comes to grief. The shroud of night is *traînant* ("dragging"), in motion, not

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"strung out," which is static. *"Entends, ma chère, entends la douce Nuit qui marche"* is not conveyed by "listen, my Dearest, hear the sweet night march!" What informs the original is the stately and inexorable forward movement, to whose ineluctability the repetition of *entends* contributes, even while suggesting also the intimate persuasion of a repeated pat on the head. Switching from "listen" to "hear" jettisons both effects. In the second hemistich the sense of spacious progression is achieved by the rubato of *Nuit* refusing reduction to monosyllabicity, and by the open feminine ending of *marche* ("walks") continuing the disyllabic movement of the line. Lowell's monosyllables ending with the incorrect "march" (it should be something like "treading," "pacing" or "advancing"), both too military and too short, suggest a night that arrives like a platoon in close-order drill rather than a blessed solvent in which the poet and his pain can dissolve and cease to be.

But perhaps we should pay special attention to Lowell's versions from the Italian: in the *Paris Review* interview Lowell speaks of his work with that language as something "which I have studied closely." Let us look, then, at his rendition of Leopardi's *"L'infinito."* In the case of such a particularly famous poem, the translator's responsibility to the original is even greater than usual. Lowell ignores Leopardi's hendecasyllabics and substitutes free verse, not the ideal vehicle for this formally controlled, highly assonant, bittersweet reverie. Again Lowell's sense of place is faulty and plays havoc with the topography: "That hill pushed off by itself was always dear/ to me and the hedges near/ it that cut away so much of the final horizon." But Leopardi is himself on that lonely hill—"pushed off" implies that he is looking toward it; the hedge, too, is *on* the hill—"near it" is utterly mystifying, though "near" does, to be sure, rhyme with "dear." The poet on the hill cannot see much of the farthest horizon because the hedge excludes his gaze. This picture and its symbolic significance are neatly obfuscated by Lowell's circumlocutions.

Lowell now gives us "I reasoned" for *"nel pensier mi fingo,"* which is conjuring up before the mind's eye or imagining—anything but reasoning. Thereupon we read, "I set about comparing my silence to those voices" (of the winds); but that is not at all what Leopardi is comparing: the silences of infinite space with

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the sound of the wind in the trees. And where Leopardi cherishes "the living season and its sounds," Lowell abstractively extols "things . . . and all their reasons and choices." Leopardi's conclusion, "So amid this immensity my thought is drowned; and shipwreck is sweet to me in this sea," turns into "It's sweet to destroy my mind/ and go down/ and wreck in this sea where I drown." That mind-destruction is irrelevant Lowellian violence, and "go down . . . wreck . . . drown" is clumsy tautology.

But Lowell is supposed to have performed an outstanding service to Montale; what about his translations from that poet? The same problems obtain here. Take *"La casa dei doganieri,"* which Lowell translates as "The Coastguard House." Montale here recalls a visit to a shore-watchers' house (in no sense "a death-cell," as Lowell gratuitously suggests at the very outset) with a woman he loved and still loves. She, however, is not beside him now; she has forgotten that house. The poem is a night-piece; at a crucial point Montale observes "but you remain alone and do not breathe here in the dark." The dark, significantly, is here, not there; the poet is in it and vainly yearns to share its intimacy with the woman. Lowell translates: "but you house alone/ and hold your hollow breath there in the dark." To transpose the dark and the breath elsewhere, into a house of the woman's, is to miss the sad immediacy of the unshared *here*. The derogatory and uncalled-for "hollow" is likewise detrimental. But not content with missing the place, Lowell promptly misses the time as well. The last stanza continues the nocturnal meditation: "Oh, the receding horizon, where the light of the tanker rarely flares" is changed by Lowell into "Oh the derelict horizon,/ sunless except for the/ orange hull of a lonely, drudging tanker." Derelict horizon is nice, but now the time turns into day: "sunless" and "orange hull" perceptible only by daylight. By splitting the poem into night and day, the actual contrast between past and present, between this moment and the erosion of time, is forfeited.

Elsewhere, too, Lowell takes unwarrantable liberties with Montale. In *"L'anguilla,"* after evoking the life cycle of the eel, the poet asks the woman the climactic question, *"puoi tu/ non crederla sorella?"*—can you consider her (the eel) not your sister? Lowell stands this on its head: "can you call her *Sister?*" Nature, befriended by Montale (the woman cannot deny her kinship with

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the eel), is kept at arm's length by Lowell (the woman is suspected of inability to confess her closeness to the fish). Again, in *"La primavera hitleriana,"* Montale concludes, after conjuring up the horrors of the occupation, with a hopeful gaze into the future. Lowell, however, omits almost all of that long last strophe in order to be able to end his version, "Hitlerian Spring," on a note of despair, which he heightens by rendering "Oh, the wounded spring is still a feast if it freezes this death to death" as "April's reopened wound is raw!" Of course, in the Introduction of *Imitations* Lowell unabashedly proclaims that he has made all sorts of cuts, additions, transpositions, and seems to think it all quite justified. But does a translator—even if he calls himself by another name, such as "imitator," supposed to set him beyond the reach of criticism—have the right to change the entire mood, intention, import of a poem? Of a serious poem by a genuine poet? At what point does an act of "imitation" become an immoral act?

In the interview already quoted, Lowell speaks of the closeness and kinship he felt for the Rilke and Rimbaud poems he translated. We have already seen what he has done to his kinsman Rilke; how has he dealt with that other, no less major kinsman, Rimbaud? If, for instance, one reads Lowell's version of *"Les Chercheuses de poux,"* whose title becomes "The Lice-Hunters" (though it should, of course, be "The Louse-hunters"; thus one says "fox-hunters" in English, not "foxes-hunters"), one would never guess that Rimbaud wrote it in mingled gratitude and amusement for two maiden aunts of his friend Izembard. Upon emerging from a week's stay in jail, the young poet was deloused by these two good Samaritans. The poem, irrespective of its autobiographical basis, evokes the mixture of relief and awkwardness a boy feels while lice are being crushed to death in his hair. Lowell's version seems to be about two wicked fairies that descend on a child, perhaps in his fever dream, and somehow cruelly torment him by—of all things—delousing him. That makes no sense and no poetry. As for *"Bateau ivre,"* Lowell announces that he has cut out a third of it; he calls this procedure "unclotting," and the poem "some of the more obscure Rimbaud." What he does keep, however, does almost less justice to Rimbaud than what he omits. As if this were not enough, Lowell takes a couple of poems by Rilke and adds to them stanzas of his own.

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I could cite endlessly. What, for example, could be more distasteful than Lowell's taking three poems from Heine's final sequence, *Aus der Matratzengruft,* written with irony, tenderness, and no mawkish self-pity from the very deathbed, and turning these immensely simple yet trenchant poems into maundering, anachronistic, rhythmless lucubrations? One quatrain must illustrate the whole shameful procedure. Heine writes: "My day was merry, happy was my night./ My people cheered me on whenever I smote/ The lyre of poetry. My song was joy and fire,/ It kindled many a lovely blaze." No great poetry in this particular stanza, only the prideful invocation of past happiness, and, in the German, a graceful movement: *"Mein Tag war heiter, glücklich meine Nacht./ Mir jauchzte stets mein Volk, wenn ich die Leier/ Der Dichtkunst schlug. Mein Lied war Lust und Feuer,/ Hat manche schöne Gluten angefacht."* Lowell comes up with this: "My zenith was luckily happier than my night:/ whenever I touched the lyre of inspiration, I smote/ the Chosen People. Often—all sex and thunder—/ I pierced those overblown and summer clouds. . . ." This is a painful mixture of deliberate and inadvertent misreading. To translate *Lust* as "sex" ("lust") is to perpetuate a traditional freshman boner; the rest may be wilful distortion. Heine is happy that both his public life ("day") and his love life ("night") were fun; Lowell's pessimism has to change this to some kind of glum parabola (from zenith to night). Heine says that his poetry was beloved by his public; Lowell turns this into Heine's allegedly unrelenting attack on—whom? The Jews? The Germans? But Heine was never consistent in any of his likes or dislikes. He says his poetry was joyous and fierce (romance and satire), and that it stirred up some pretty passions (this could be taken both literally and ironically). Lowell has Heine somehow deflating his readers with sex and anger. Lowell's image does not work: if the readers are pompous, overblown clouds, why bring in "summer" with its positive connotation?

An imitation such as "Heine Dying in Paris" is not only an act of poetic vandalism, it is also a falsification of Heine's life and of Heine's evaluation of his life. Ostensibly rendering Heine's spirit if not his letter, Lowell is actually lessening the man's human stature (ambiguous as it was) as well as his poetic gifts. This, perpetrated on a dead and defenseless poet, is an act of double in-

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decency. And such cavalier insouciance is rampant in *Imitations.* For example, Rilke's poem that Lowell translates as "Pigeons," and whose original he identifies as *"Die Tauben,"* is not at all *"Die Tauben,"* written in Paris in 1913, but the last of a series of verse letters to Erika Mitterer entitled "For Erika, on the Feast of Praise," dated Ragaz 1926, only four months before the poet's death. But what are we to expect from Lowell who says in the interview I have been quoting from that these imitations "were both a continuation of my own bias and a release from myself." A curious contradiction that! And the Introduction to *Imitations* begins: "This book is partly self-sufficient and separate from its sources, and should be first read as a sequence, one voice running through many personalities, contrasts and repetitions." Not only is this megalomania, it is also, worse yet, nonsense. A book made up of so many diverse ingredients can neither be a sequence nor tell us much about the translator beyond something about his translatorial taste and competence. And if one voice really runs through the whole enterprise, the enterprise must be biased and sick to the core. Finally, I doubt that anyone who "first" reads this book "as a sequence" can be expected to come back for a second helping of any kind.

The begetter of Lowell's imitations is, without question, Pound, and particularly the Pound of the versions from Propertius. But though I am no great admirer of Pound's Propertius (and even less of such jesuitical champions of Pound's Propertius as Hugh Kenner), I cannot be wholly unmoved by Propertius's Pound, that is to say, by what Propertius brought out in Pound. But it is precisely because Pound was able to ignore his original so sublimely, and because Pound is a great enough poet in his own right, that the damage to Sextus Propertius becomes an homage to Ezra Pound and English free verse. Lowell, however, is not that free from his models, nor has his free verse the energy and variety of Pound's. It is the neither-fish-nor-fowlness of Lowell's imitations, plus all the red herring they contain, that makes them perverse as translation and unpalatable as poetry. And though there may be only a tenuous connection between literature and morality, there seems to me to be a more demonstrable one between this kind of translation and immorality.

Yet the fault is not entirely that of the poet-translator who,

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puffed up with a mixture of merited and unmerited praise, loses his sense of judgment. Almost as much to blame are the critics who well-nigh unanimously acclaimed *Imitations* at its publication in 1961, and the critics who in the years since then have not dared to raise a dissenting voice. Typical of the less than enthusiastic reviews was that by Louis Simpson in this journal, which, after some well-taken strictures, nevertheless concluded that Lowell's "translations of Rimbaud and Rilke, for example, are interesting in poetic terms—that is, in every line difficulties of sound and meaning are resolved. To check his 'imitations' against the originals is to learn something about the tact of poetry." That last sentence is not only a gem of overstatement, it is even an inadvertent truth—if one can learn to identify something elusive by its total absence. Hugh B. Staples, in his *Robert Lowell: The First Twenty Years,* considers these imitations "more than translations." As Mies van der Rohe propounded a kind of architecture in which "less is more," Lowell may have produced a type of translation in which more is less.[3]

To turn now to Lowell's most recent dramatic version, *Prometheus Bound.* He calls it "derived from Aeschylus," and I am forced to conclude that Lowell's derivations are no better than his imitations. Modern dramatists have frequently retold Greek myths or Greek dramas, even Greek dramas about Greek myths. The aim of these versions has always been to find a contemporary interpretation or application of the time-honored, timeless originals, so that what emerged was a new work by Molière or Giraudoux, by Kleist or Hebbel, that was an integral part of its author's

[3] Lowell's *Phaedra* is a dramatic imitation: it does to Racine's play what *Imitations* does to the poems it attacks. Two examples will have to suffice. *"J'ai revu l'ennemi que j'avais éloigné:/ Ma blessure trop vive aussitôt a saigné./ Ce n'est plus une ardeur dans mes veines cachée:/ C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée"* becomes ". . . I saw Hippolytus/ each day, and felt my ancient, venomous/ passion tear my body limb from limb;/ naked Venus was clawing down her victim." No comment could be as damning as mere juxtaposition, and I offer none. (I cannot, however, help wondering whether Venus became naked by way of fractured French: *"toute entière"*—in the altogether.) And again: *"O toi, qui vois la honte où je suis descendue,/ Implacable Vénus, suis-je assez confondue?/ Tu ne saurais plus loin pousser ta cruauté./ Ton triomphe est parfait; tous les traits ont porté"* becomes "Implacable Aphrodite, now you see/ the depths to which your tireless cruelty/ has driven Phaedra—here is my bosom:/ every thrust and arrow has struck home." It will be noted that even where the meaning is more or less conveyed, the exquisite cadences of the original verge on, or indeed hurtle into, cacophony. What we are left with is (in a line of Hippolytus's perhaps significantly not translated by Lowell) *"Cette indigne moitié d'une si belle histoire!"*

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*oeuvre*. Lowell's *Prometheus Bound* sets out, likewise, to be "an unbinding of Prometheus for us." In the same program note, Lowell asserts that though "nothing is modernised . . . my own concerns and worries and those of the times seep in." Lowell also affirms that there are no tanks or cigarette lighters in the play. True. There are, however, microbes, phalanxes, wastes of the moon, and various references and allusions to atomic cataclysm, to the Freudian son cutting off (in Lowell's flavorsomely idiomatic language) "his father's balls," to the war in Vietnam. But that kind of seepage is only natural.

What is unnatural about this play is that it is not as a whole about anything identifiable. Of drama as such there is not a great deal in Aeschylus, but at least we know what the issue is: power and intellect join hands to rule the world, power usurps the throne and casts down intellect, power finds (this is only hinted at in this first play of the trilogy) that it needs intellect to save it from self-destruction. In Lowell there is only generalized violence; expatiation on a variety of muddy issues (and mud, as Francis Fergusson has noted, is a dominant presence in the play); and indulgence in a thick, clotted prose full of headstrong, runaway images. The language is something of a cross between Abraham Cowley and André Breton, but with a typically Lowellian savagery informing most of it. The violence of the diction and the limpness of the "action" form about the only notable conflict in this work, which does, in a way, manage the impossible—to be more static than Aeschylus's drama.

If one looks very hard, one may catch references—besides those already mentioned to the Bomb and the Vietnam war—to the plight of the powerless intellectual in the Great Society; worthy themes all, but none is developed, nothing goes deeper than surface ripples. There are felicitous lines and occasional forceful tropes. Thus Prometheus says of men, "I gave them hope, blind hopes! When one blind hope lifts, another drifts down to replace it. Men see much less surely now, but they suffer less—they can hardly draw breath now without taking hope." Or this, from Io about her growing up, "I could speak to the cattle. Later, I could speak to the herdsmen. Later, I could speak to my father." But there is also an abundance of nonworking imagery, blindly drifting tropes: "When I close my eyes, I am able to think. I can al-

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most move. In the darkness, the stars move down on us like burning metal." How do we get from closed eyes to stars? And if the stars shower us with sizzling metal, doesn't that interfere with our thinking? Again, Io says: "I seem to wade through my own heaviness, as if I were a pasture sinking back into a marsh." This conjures up a pasture wading through a marsh; moreover, wading through implies emergence, whereas sinking is submergence. But most typical is this from Prometheus to Io: "Water spiders will slow and clot on the thick syrup of your shadow." That is not metaphor, merely mucilage.

Whole paragraphs are murky. Thus Prometheus says, "I saw the head of Cronus was a slab of meat, and it seemed to me if I could cut through the slab of meat, I would find a silver ball. The ball was there, it cracked open, inside it another, and another and another, and then suddenly, the head of Cronus, my own head, and the heads of all the gods were broken spheres, all humming and vibrating with silver wires. The whole world was an infinite sphere of intelligence." This is an uneasy mixture of Andrew Marvell and René Magritte. But as for meaning: if Cronus is a fool, why are there all those silver balls of mind in him? Why should mind be a set of Chinese boxes, or balls? And what are silver wires doing *inside* those balls? And how do the spheres continue to hum and vibrate (i.e., function) when they are cracked open? Such imagery troubles one on the page; on the stage, it absolutely refuses to move forward.

One of the sources of confusion in the play is that it keeps contradicting itself. On the simplest level we get Ocean saying that one of his hands is paralyzed "from managing . . . this big bird" on which he rides. A few lines later he tells us "I guided him with my mind. No reins or bit." On a profounder level, Prometheus regrets: "I should have been more loyal to the idiocy of things," yet this is contradicted by what the *status quo* harbors: "The nothingness of our beginning is hard at work to bury us." These statements often sound wonderful until one starts to analyze them: "We have always wanted to escape with our lives from life"—upon scrutiny, this apparently penetrating paradox means either that we don't want to die or that we don't really want to live, probably true both ways but not very startling in either. Or again, "I know that I must suffer, because I suffer without grandeur or

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nobility"; this rings out like a giant aperçu, but proves to be only a medium-size non sequitur. Perhaps, however, we should examine a longer sample; here is a fragment of Prometheus's interminable prophecy to Io: "You will run faster than you ever ran before, but more peacefully now, as if you know [sic] the flies would never catch up, that now you had only to fight off the death-stings of your own body, that hound-pack of affliction, closing in to kill you, poor bleeding hound, your tongue dripping, your teeth snapping, the fur of some animal darting before you, grizzled white mixed with the red hairs, like the beard of Zeus, but no face there, no flesh, only a force dragging you forward to your death, a power so empty, so tireless and so cruel, it could only come from God." One gets a sense of meaningless, luxuriating brutality; of metaphors that clash and collide and cancel one another out—unless they don't make sense to begin with: what sort of an animal could Io, poor, persecuted cow, possibly be hounding? And why?

The one episode that seems to exercise Lowell's imagination is the story of Io. In seemingly endless speeches, Io and Prometheus rehearse her seduction by Zeus, her frantic, tortured wanderings, and her ghastly death to come. In fact, it is as if Lowell described at least three separate death scenes for her, each more agonizing than the previous, yet, for all that, not very different. The attitudes toward women and sex in the play are about as horrified as those toward despotism and death. Thus there is a gratuitous attack on Prometheus's wife, on the female Seabirds (Lowell's version of the chorus of Oceanids) who are made even less appealing than in Aeschylus, and, in a way, on Io, whose sufferings are dwelt on with monstrous relish. And what is one to make of Io's account of the first results of impregnation by Zeus: "two flies, as big as . . . thumbs . . . had crawled from my swollen stomach, half-dead, and already beginning to mate," an event on which Hera commented, "When women are warm enough to make love, the gods send them flies. The flies rise from your sticky flesh, are warmed by your heat, and kept alive by the blood from your thighs [!] or the milk from your breasts." We have come a long way from Aeschylus, but in what direction?

I find it impossible to say what the meaning or purpose of Lowell's play is. During certain scenes when Prometheus

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staunchly resists direct or indirect blandishments to play ball with Zeus, I almost wonder whether the whole thing is not an allegory of Lowell's famous refusal to appear at a garden party on Lyndon Johnson's lawn. If not that, it is just an all-around scattering of animosities, some justifiable, many not even fathomable. Structured hatred has produced, among others, some of the great plays of Ibsen and Strindberg; promiscuous hostility can at best, as here, yield a few good but disconnected moments.

Such as it is, Lowell's play did not deserve the treatment meted out to it by Jonathan Miller, who directed it for the Yale Drama School last May. In a program note characteristically five times longer than the author's, Miller explained his method. Prometheus figures in a myth that has "mysterious and erratic power." We learn next that "speaking with strict accuracy, plays of this sort [Greek drama? Plays based on myth? Plays whose protagonist is chained to a rock?] are located in something which for want of a better word we might call antiquity." Traditional productions of them, we learn, don't work, "But the point about these plays is that in some mysterious way their dramatic thrust seems to survive and transcend the time and space in which they were originally set." For want of a better word, we might call such utterances fatuity of the most advanced sort. Next we read that "contextual dislocation" is required for these myths to "become renewed and invigorated." In other words, we must update the play, see "round the edges of the text," but be careful to avoid changing dates only "to create a chic shock." The great difficulty with *Prometheus* is, it seems, that it "takes place in a primeval limbo," has characters "little more than talking vapors" and that any "antique" or "literal" rendition "would be almost ludicrous and even a bit pansy." Particularly to be dreaded are the "mechanical constraints indicated by the stage directions."

So Miller picked the early seventeenth century to set his play in, because it was a cultural watershed, because classical forms were then being reprocessed, and because the period was "full of peculiarly horrible politics . . . The Thirty Years War, Regicide . . . military theocracy." As a result, the setting (beautifully designed by Michael Annals) represents the outer walls of a "shattered castle keep" with strong overtones of the inside of Piranesi's dungeons. Thus the set suggests both that Prometheus is inside a

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dungeon and that he romps around outside it on a platform across a moat; and, to create total confusion, Lowell's text repeatedly locates him in "the thin, disabling air of this mountain top." Hephaestus and his crew seem, in the dark, to chain him to something as he utters piercing cries. When the lights go on, he is unchained and his trousers are bloodied, which, as Francis Fergusson has pointed out, may mean that he has been castrated. Thereafter, he moves about quite freely, despite frequent references to his immobilizing chains (presumably those "mechanical constraints [of] the stage directions" by which no director worth his salt would be hamstrung or castrated). The costumes are shabby and seventeenth-century; Miller tells us they stem from engravings by Jacques Callot, and indeed the characters look like disbanded *lansquenets,* impoverished petty gentry, or, rather, like a bunch of impecunious strolling players impersonating them. Ocean, for example, appears in a battered admiral's hat and epaulets, and the Seabirds seem to be wearing the hand-me-downs of the lady of the manor. When the Seabirds harangue Prometheus, they often read from their schoolgirl slates; when Prometheus utters some of his homiletic tirades, they take these down as dictation on the slates. Sometimes he goes too fast for them and is obliged to slow down or repeat a word or two. When Prometheus tells Io she will bear a child to Zeus, the three virtuous ladies of the chorus avert their eyes and cover their ears in mock, or perhaps real, horror—who is to say what in this production is mock, and what real? When Io—desperate, tormented Io—asks Prometheus, "Tell me where I must go," she playfully slaps his arm and pettishly stamps her foot. When Prometheus tells her that he need not describe all the monsters she'll encounter—"When you have seen one, you have seen them all"—everything stops while the entire cast enjoys a hearty laugh. At the end of Act One, where Io is heartrendingly beseeching Prometheus to help her, all go off merrily for an intermission: the supposedly chained Prometheus offers his arm to the allegedly fly-haunted Io, and they walk off together across the fosse followed by the Seabirds animatedly chattering away among themselves. As Act Two begins, they all come out in the same informal way, plainly a troupe of down-at-heel actors in that most horrible age of regicide, military theocracy, and Puritan shutdown of the theatres.

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It is clear that Miller does not believe in doing things by halves: why settle for being "almost ludicrous and a bit pansy" when you can be absolutely laughable and completely camp? On opening night, he also invoked Brechtian alienation, but that holds no water here, either: in Brecht there are full-bodied plots against which the alienation effect can pit itself; in Aeschylus the very remoteness, superhumanness, and elevated tone make alienation redundant. No, in reducing *Prometheus Bound* to the level of seeing "round the edge of the text," or, in other words, beyond the fringe, Jonathan Miller was simply using that directorial prerogative made famous in our time by Elia Kazan and especially Peter Brook, which consists of the director's virtually rewriting the play, and which corresponds on another plane to Lowell's imitations of Rilke, Rimbaud, and the rest.

There are two principles at work here. First, by adapting a celebrated poem or play, or by "dislocating" the play one is directing, one cashes in on the original's prestige while also exhibiting one's prowess in the alterations; at the same time, one can always blame the foreignness or intractability of the original for one's failures. Secondly, one uses this as a surrogate for whatever creativity one finds oneself lacking. A poet runs out of poetry of his own, so he makes it out of someone else's, rather like the fly that lays its eggs in the living body of a certain caterpillar for the larvae to feed on. A director wishes he were a playwright, and, by way of staging it, rewrites the play entrusted to him. It is all part of that most terrible contemporary phenomenon in the arts that mistakes for inspired innovation what is merely lack of respect.

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A. D. HOPE

# On an Engraving by Casserius

*for Dr. John Z. Bowers*

Set on this bubble of dead stone and sand,
Lapped by its frail balloon of lifeless air,
Alone in the inanimate void, they stand,
These clots of thinking molecules who stare
Into the night of nescience and death,
And, whirled about with their terrestrial ball,
Ask of all being its motion and its frame:
This of all human images takes my breath;
Of all the joys in being a man at all,
This holds my spirit in its quickening flame.

Turning the leaves of this majestic book
My thoughts are with those great cosmographers,
Surgeon adventurers who undertook
To probe and chart time's other universe.
This one engraving holds me with its theme
More than all maps made in that century
Which set true bearings for each cape and star,
De Quiros' vision or Newton's cosmic dream,
This reaches towards the central mystery
Of whence our being draws and what we are.

It came from that great school in Padua:
Casserio and Spiegel made this page.
Vesalius, who designed the *Fabrica,*
There strove, but burned his book at last in rage;
Fallopius by its discipline laid bare
The elements of this humanity,

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Without which none knows that which treats the soul;
Fabricius talked with Galileo there:
Did those rare spirits in their colloquy
Divine in their two skills the single goal?

"One force that moves the atom and the star";
Says Galileo, "one basic law beneath
All change!" "Would light from Achevnar
Reveal how embryon forms within its sheath?"
Fabricius asks, and smiles. Talk such as this,
Ranging the bounds of our whole universe
Could William Harvey once have heard? And once
Hearing, strike out that strange hypothesis,
Which in *De Motu Cordis* twice recurs,
Coupling the heart's impulsion with the sun's?

Did Thomas Browne at Padua, too, in youth
Hear of their talk of universal law
And form that notion of particular truth
Framed to correct a science they foresaw,
That darker science of which he used to speak
In later years and called the Crooked Way
Of Providence? Did *he* foresee perhaps
An age in which all sense of the unique,
And singular dissolves, like ours today,
In diagrams, statistics, cables, maps?

Not here! The graver's tool in this design
Aims still to give not general truth alone,
Blueprint of science or data's formal line:
Here in its singularity he has shown
The image of an individual soul;
Bodied in this one woman, he makes us see
The shadow of his anatomical laws.
An artist's vision animates the whole,
Shines through the scientist's detailed scrutiny
And links the person and the abstract cause.

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Such were the charts of those who pressed beyond
Vesalius their master, year by year
Tracing each bone, each muscle, every frond
Of nerve until the whole design lay bare.
Thinking of this dissection, I descry
The tiers of faces, their teacher in his place,
The talk at the cadaver carried in:
"A woman—with child!"; I hear the master's dry
Voice as he lifts a scalpel from its case:
"With each new step in science, we begin."

Who was she? Though they never knew her name,
Dragged from the river, found in some alley at dawn,
This corpse none cared, or dared perhaps, to claim;
The dead child in her belly still unborn,
Might have passed, momentary as a shooting star,
Quenched like the misery of her personal life,
Had not the foremost surgeon of Italy,
Giulio Casserio of Padua,
Bought her for science, questioned her with his knife,
And drawn her for his great *Anatomy;*

Where still in the abundance of her grace,
She stands among the monuments of time
And with a feminine delicacy displays
His elegant dissection: the sublime
Shaft of her body opens like a flower
Whose petals, folded back expose the womb,
Cord and placenta and the sleeping child,
Like instruments of music in a room
Left when her grieving Orpheus left his tower
Forever, for the desert and the wild.

Naked she waits against a tideless shore,
A sybilline stance, a noble human frame
Such as those old anatomists loved to draw.
She turns her head as though in trouble or shame,
Yet with a dancer's gesture holds the fruit
Plucked, though not tasted, of the Fatal Tree.

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Something of the first Eve is in this pose
And something of the second in the mute
Offering of her child in death to be
Love's victim and her flesh its mystic rose.

No figure with wings of fire and back-swept hair
Swoops with his: Blessed among Women!—no sword
Of the spirit cleaves or quickens her; yet there
She too was overshadowed by the Word,
Was chosen, and by her humble gift of death
The lowly and the poor in heart give tongue,
Wisdom puts down the mighty from their seat;
The vile rejoice and rising, hear beneath
Scalpel and forceps, tortured into song,
Her body utter their magnificat.

Two hundred years since first that cry rang out:
Two hundred years, the patient, probing knife
Cut towards its answer—yet we stand in doubt:
Living, we cannot tell the source of life.
Old science, old certainties that lit our way
Shrink to poor guesses, dwindle to a myth.
Today's truths teach us how we were beguiled;
Tomorrow's how blind our vision of today.
The universals we thought to conjure with
Pass: there remain the mother and the child.

Loadstone, loadstar, alike to each new age,
There at the crux of time they stand and scan,
Past every scrutiny of prophet or sage,
Still unguessed prospects in this venture of Man.
To generations, which we leave behind,
They taught a difficult, selfless skill: to show
The mask beyond the mask beyond the mask;
To ours another vista, where the mind
No longer asks for answers, but to know:
What questions are there which we fail to ask?

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Who knows, but to the age to come they speak
Words that our own is still unapt to hear:
"These are the limits of all you sought and seek;
More our yet unborn nature cannot bear.
Learn now that all man's intellectual quest
Was but the stirrings of a foetal sleep;
The birth you cannot haste and cannot stay
Nears its appointed time; turn now and rest
Till that new nature ripens, till the deep
Dawns with that unimaginable day."

*Easter, 1967*

NORMAN TALBOT

# Dreamtrees

1
Her teeth make small noises
in the night & the leaves
of the dreamtree she breathes
& towers above her in the dark
turn from green volubility & shine
to the clenched yellow of defeated fruit.

2
I have grown watching
dreamtrees in the sleeping breath
of children lithe & windwoken,
laughing, raging in leafrush
seasons from all quarters,
passionately white & yellow in the flower.

3
Dreamtrees have dazzled
me halfsleeping on my arm

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alone & close to the one
woman each time she was—
O after the flickering
certainty that runs under bark
& becomes the leaves burning—
after, in the quiet sad flowering.

4
There was the friend I watched
sleeping a year's night
whose dreamtree rose without xylem
but subtly slipped
& glimmered from his mouth
in fronds & ribbons a booming
purple cloud—twisting
within itself, ecstatic
with small umbels of several colours
mainly white, still.

5
A jolt of breath from her
as savage as if she were awake
bore up all the branches of thick
dead twigs clamouring though dead
from the broken places.
Whiskey awoke her tears, & I remember
the sleeping spirit's stir,
the salt shock quivering the light
of the dry tree till the light
dust only was left old,
masking the new dreamtree—
thick & pale boletus,
alien & rich.

6
There are some I am sure have tendrils,
some wilt & gulp like sea anemones
& some are so still they seem ageless

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in deep greying forests, & some still
differently, stone underwater trees—
& some with allure & mechanical poison birds.

7
I do not like to imagine
my own dreamtree, or recall
the ecstasy after the first time
I made love well, when I sat
above my bed, for the first time
since very young (any man
is insulated from the child),
saw the slight dreamtree waver & shine
in the lips of myself still
on the bed, & felt
I was floated in the branches.

I knew it was evergreen, secret
only because I was too central to myself
& dared not trust my own circumference—

but now, in absent nights,
I feel the change,
white powder under the bark,
scars from the grafts of the women
& men I loved, the tight
full shape & its crown unpruned
& thronged—
I am afraid
of the rub of branch on branch
but more afraid
to feel the thorns newsprung
from primary branches, & on them
I am most afraid
to feel the dim shapes
I almost recognise
hanging small & heavy,
furred & limp.

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# Clew Bay

*stanzas written in dejection*

Clew Bay shone with the evening
halfdaft with islands
& the tide plaited itself
going every which way,
split again & again
by the long drumlins left behind
where the ancient wandering
singing glacier strayed
here too early to meet
gulf streams from the States
& broke up, crazy, lonely,
under the west dawn's heights.

We camped here once by the threads
of islands, in the detour
a stream made being hesitant,
in maidenly fear of the brine,
shy with pebbles, trotting beside
& beside the salt water
& finally flinging off grass,
laughing & jumping in—
the evening was on the islands
whose drenching green
pelted down the bay like the last
raindrops before it's fine.

The damp mown hay scented
& clouded the hillside
where we put up the tent.
While it rained in the night—
smelling of islands all
centuried in seaweed—
our sleepingbags lay parallel
our love quiet.
These years after I know
she fears we've divided
to two islets, the glacier gone,
between the teeth of tides.

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CHARLES HIGHAM

# Vampire

At midnight, wind
Stripping my skin, I turn
Tight as a screw
To see across fields the moon
Stalking, and firs stand
Like spinsters stiff against life.

I let my cloak fall.
I feel the delicate threads
Of spiders
With the stiff lightness of feathers
Drag down my flesh,
Winding a silken shroud, a death-cocoon.

Pared like a fruit
Blackened in fall, I wait love's knife.
She comes, bearing it,
That princess, slits my heart
And I can go
Released from bones, skin, hair,

Light as a parasol
Turned inside out by the wind.
Spines, webs, taut wings,
Eyes like blue coals, tong claws.
And spin a spiral
Of black joy up the tower

To pounce on her,
That frail girl in her bed of glass,
And with my fang
Of purest ivory, inspect her throat.
She does not dread
Me now, but rises, rises,

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Holding my furred form
To her, feeling the blood that courses
To my own throat, with
An exultant calm. Her loins are not
Touched, yet she still
May be called a bride. Of darkness.

O the wind! The wind!
It calls me from her, I fly like a holly
Leaf across fields
To black trees I know well, a lake of ice
I course, seeing,
No image, for I cannot reflect,

To the drab Carpathians
And crowded villages, huddled like beasts,
Where under roofs
Of smoking aspen, they wait by the chimneys,
Those women who know
I will come to them, a lover.

I can give them life,
And succor, like a furred paw close their mouths
And still their cravings.
Through me, they breathe
Dark waters, through me
They course with the sap of lichens.

Come with me, out
Of that flesh which binds you, blood
Which repeats in
Limbs like a knell, reminding,
Reminding you
Of your mortality, of pain.

Instead, soar
With me to the sky's icy surf, or plunge

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Down wheat fields that
Never end, stricken with fire,
Black corridors
Leading to an ashen moon.

I can end desire!
In my arms all things are still!
Let your love course
Down my wings and walk
Streaming with
The banners of a thousand armies!

And as dawn breaks
Avoiding that lean monk with his stake
And book of prayers
I will leave you, out in the wood,
Asleep, asleep,
On the mossed roots of the upas-tree
Without a dream.

W. HART-SMITH

## Kangaroos

Brown out of the brown tussock a darker brown
head rises as if thrust up cautiously on a pole.

A green bird on a feathering grass-stem,
that bends under its weight, flutters

and sinks out of sight. It is the only disturbance
except for the reiterated clicking of castanets

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and the fife-notes of insects.

One notices the head gone,
pulled down out of sight, like the vanished bird,

but all over the unfurled
map of the landscape minute brown

figures, dots, jump, all diminishing, yet
each pursuing

lines that intersect, making a maze
of crazy map-lines, meaningless angles.

The skin of the land is a deep fur
maddeningly come alive

with deliberate great fleas.

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FRANÇOIS BONDY

# Italo Svevo and Ripe Old Age

> Strange! I feel so young and am at the same time so different from what I was in my youth! Could this be ripe old age? —Italo Svevo, "Umbertino"

In Italo Svevo, fables play a part close to that allotted to them in the work of Franz Kafka—the last author for whom Svevo showed enthusiasm and one to whom he intended to devote a study. One of Svevo's last fables is entitled "The Mother." A chick born in an incubator will not resign himself to being motherless. In a neighboring garden he spots some chicks thronging around a hen—whom, in his ignorance, he calls a giant chick —who protects her brood with her ample, warm body. "Cucco," the chick, feels that this being is surely his mother, and when the hen, by scratching on the ground, produces worms for her chicks, Cucco rushes in, delighted to have understood his mother's intentions better than the others, and gobbles up the worm. The hen hurls herself at the intruder and beats him with mighty strokes of her beak. Cucco thinks at first that these are vehement caresses, but, wounded, he takes to his heels. The mother hen, stopped by a hedge, stares at Cucco with red, furious eyes and says, "Who are you, you who steal the food I procure with so much effort?"—"I am Cucco," the chick says humbly, "but you, who are you, and why have you inflicted these wounds on me?" To this double inquiry the hen responds majestically, "I am the mother"—and turns her back on him.

This fable may have been written somewhere around 1926, at the time when Svevo's third and last novel, *The Confessions of Zeno,* met with sudden literary fame in France, where it had been discovered thanks to James Joyce, Valery Larbaud, Adrienne Monnier and several other writers. At that time, Italian criticism—with the one exception of the poet Eugenio Montale—was totally unaware of his work; the influential *Corriere della Sera,* though it had accorded a review to Svevo's first novel, *A Life,* did not deem it necessary to speak of *Zeno.* The publisher Treves refused to reissue the novels that were out of print, even though the author was offering to share the cost. And now, suddenly, Italy

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had to come to terms with a reputation "made in Paris" by numerous writers: those just named as well as Benjamin Crémieux, André Thérive, Nino Franck, and still others. It was the hour Svevo had been waiting for for a quarter of a century, the hour of belated recognition. Yet here is what he could read then in the Italian periodicals:

> Italo Svevo, a Triestine merchant, author of mediocre novels, viewed among us with the indifference he deserves, finds himself suddenly proclaimed a great writer by a decadent Irish novelist living in Trieste, Joyce; by a decadent poet from Paris, Valery Larbaud; and by a critic, Benjamin Crémieux, who, because he is competent in matters of French literature, passes in France for a connoisseur of Italian literature, of which he has some notions among people who have none. What are the merits of Svevo? The fact that more than any other Italian he has espoused a passive and analytical literature which reached its peak with Proust, and which will be considered a decadent art as long as it is held that art must be the work of living and active men, and that a painter is more deserving than a mirror.

This verdict, from the year 1927, stems from the young Guido Piovene—who, nevertheless, was to become an enlightened critic and a thoroughly "analytical" novelist. But this Svevo did not live to see, any more than he was able to note his profound influence on one part of the new Italian literature—one thinks of Vittorini, of Leo Ferrero, of Alberto Moravia—which was to claim kinship with his sobriety and place him above every other Italian writer of his generation.

In the *Corriere della Sera,* the important critic Giulio Caprin was writing: "If this unrecognized Italian is destined to be recognized some day by Europe, it will have to be accomplished through some other language, and, in any case, through *some* language. Svevo is an antiliterary curiosity in Italian literature."

The mother hen of the fable who wounds poor Cucco with her beak is without any doubt Italian culture—that culture of which Ettore Schmitz, the "Italian Swabian" Italo Svevo, Triestine irredentist, wanted to be the legitimate son, without her ever consenting to recognize him as such. In all the vast *oeuvre* of the illustrious Benedetto Croce I fully believe that the name of Svevo is not mentioned a single time; otherwise Bruno Maier, the Svevo scholar, could not have failed to make note of it in his works.

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In the period when Svevo considered the theatre his true mode of expression—"form of forms," he writes, "the only one that can render life in its immediacy"—he sent a play to Pirandello, who had been his guest in Trieste, asking him for his judgment and advice, but he never received an answer.

Only one writer read with care the two first novels of Svevo: Paul Heyse, a once famous German novelist, who wrote the author to express his regret at seeing him go astray by placing at the centers of his tales weak and flabby creatures instead of vigorous characters. Indeed, *A Life* was originally to have been entitled *An Inept One,* and Svevo, who knew *Hamlet* by heart and was full of Turgenev and of Chekhov, as of Jean-Paul Richter and Flaubert, never created anything but "non-characters," prey to the difficulty of being. He thus could not benefit from Heyse's well-intentioned counsel. Nevertheless, until his sixty-fifth year, Svevo was not accorded by any Italian writer even the attention, full of reservations as it was, granted him by the German author, to whom so many young writers were submitting their manuscripts.

Svevo was by no means indifferent to the fate of his writings: "The greatest unanimity is that of silence," he sighed after the failure of his second novel, *As a Man Grows Older.* He renounced publication for twenty-five years. But for the happy accident of the meeting and friendship with James Joyce, he would undoubtedly not have ventured to publish another work. But Svevo's relations with society are marked by humor and a radical irony. And his own disillusionment with the dream of literary fame appeared to him as a comic element of which he made use, exactly as of other great experiences: sickness, old age, death. A story that must date from the period of "A Mother" bears witness to this; it is entitled "A Hoax." Its hero, Mario Samigli, is a "sexagenarian littérateur." His antagonist, Enrico Gaia, a traveling salesman known for his practical jokes, represents cunning and vitality incarnate. (A figure of this sort appears in all of Svevo's narratives, as Doctor Miracle does all through *The Tales of Hoffmann.*) Samigli, like Svevo himself, and like Emilio, the hero of *As a Man Grows Older,* has written in his youth a novel that went unnoticed. We are in Trieste, just after the war. Relations with Vienna, the former capital, are broken off; Gaia avails himself of this to make Samigli believe that a great Viennese publisher is offering him two hundred thousand crowns for the

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translation rights of that novel. Samigli is persuaded to sign a contract with our traveling salesman who purports to be the publisher's representative, and a bank draft is solemnly handed over to him. Why does Mario let himself be snared when the joke is obvious, all the more so since the two pranksters cannot control their guffaws through the whole affair? "It can be said," writes Svevo, "that Mario was a poor observer, a literary observer, hence one of those who can be effortlessly deceived, for if they should happen to make an exact observation, they must forthwith transform it by applying concepts to it. Whoever has had a few experiences is never lacking for concepts, because the same lines and colors can be adapted, as the case may be, to the most diverse things, and a littérateur insists on considering all of them."

So, for Svevo, it is the man of letters who is most easily duped, because he projects his desires and his ideas onto the tiniest scrap of reality, especially when his vanity is at stake.

Svevo was first appreciated in Paris and not, as he probably expected, in Vienna. By 1918 he had translated into Italian a book by Sigmund Freud. He followed closely Austrian intellectual life and, at the same time, thought of his glory in Italy. But Gaia thinks of it, too, in behalf of Samigli, and tells him, "You will retain ownership of the Italian language rights. I thought of that, for who knows what value this novel will acquire for Italy once it is known that it was translated into all languages?" And he reiterates, "Italy remains yours." As for Mario, he would have been content with a more modest sum, if only the novel could come out soon. "I am no longer young," he excuses himself, "and I should like to see my novel translated before I die."

The sentiment that here contributes to the success of a hoax had just been, for Svevo, a painful experience. In July he had written the head of the House of Treves, asking him to reissue *As a Man Grows Older:* "I am sixty-five years old, and I have no time to lose." The publisher replied that he was obliged, much to his regret, to return the manuscript that Svevo had considerably revised. "We are swamped for three more years, but your novel, in its day, would have deserved a kinder fate." In the short story, all this feeds the comedy. Not even the most flagrant contradictions can shake Samigli's faith. Svevo insists, "The littérateur's habit to cross out a phrase that dissatisfies him leads him

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into readily accepting that others should modify their statements. While elaborating on reality, he eliminates whatever jars. So here he eliminated."

One notes in this tale to what degree the Italian patriot felt himself belonging to the German culture of Central Europe. Although he had been a member of the "Patriotic League" of Trieste, national conflicts play not the slightest part in his work. He had chosen Italianness, just like his father, Schmitz, who had married an Italian woman, but he did not include literature in this commitment. Despite the all-important formative years he spent in a Bavarian school, Svevo wrote in Italian, not by a deliberate choice, but quite naturally. Neither Joyce nor contemporary French critics could associate Svevo with Austro-Hungarian literature. It was necessary, first, that the writers who were spiritually most akin to him—Kafka, Musil—be revealed. Until then the name of Svevo had to remain linked to those of Joyce and Proust, with the interior monologue, the stream of consciousness, the analyzing and distorting memory. Today Svevo takes his place quite naturally in that literature of "Cacania," along with the Croat Krleža, the Hungarian Karinthy, the Pole Bruno Schulz, and other writers of the bygone multilingual monarchy. His German translator, Piero Rismondo, and Edouard Roditi,[1] among others, have sufficiently demonstrated it. For the rest, there is no reason to sever Svevo from a more occidental tradition. The Proust-Marcel, Joyce-Dedalus, Svevo-Zeno relationships are the same: they attest to the identity of, and the distancing between, existence and work in a manner previously unknown. Illness, conceived of as a backing away from time to set it and its relation to active life into perspective, brings Svevo close to Proust, as does a sense of literature not as reflecting but as completing life.[2]

[1] Cf. "Zeno ressuscité des morts," *Preuves*, Nr. 148, February 1955.

[2] P. N. Furbank's *Italo Svevo, The Man and the Writer* (University of California Press, $6.00) is oddly divided into 250 pages on "the man" and 70 pages on "the writer." It is useful as a biography, especially on the subject of the family origins and the cultural milieu of Trieste; but does not contribute as much to an understanding of the work. Piero Rismondo, Svevo's translator into German and author of some of the best essays on his writing, in the postface to the German translation of *A Short Sentimental Journey and Other Stories* (Rowohlt, 1967) praises Furbank's book, but adds tersely, "The real monograph on Svevo has yet to be written."

Even so I am surprised that George Steiner, assessing the importance of Svevo on the occasion of Furbank's book (*The New Yorker*, June 3, 1967), should find Svevo an engaging yet minor and provincial writer, as compared to Robert

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In Svevo's consciousness all is distance, like Trieste, far from Vienna, at the periphery of the Hapsburg Empire, but far, too, from Italian culture. It is literature which is in the margin of existence for this writer who was long employed in a bank and became a very active industrialist. There is a distance also between Svevo and the language he writes. We shall come back to this later. Every erotic relationship in the narratives of Svevo is a vain attempt to overcome the coldness of being, to abolish the distance between the self and the other, between self and self—and makes it only more manifest. Illnesses and aches likewise mark a distance from immediate life. But these ills pale before old age, the phase of life when involvement in active existence decreases, when humorous observation of passions and follies is sharpened. Humor mediatizes what has been lived, which it combines with other realities in unexpected relationships. Irony refracts all happenings and turns upon itself. This irony is not only an acid wit, it is above all an instrument of analysis, the apprenticeship of disillusion. Like La Rochefoucauld, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud, Svevo is a writer who "unmasks."

Svevo's spoken language is the Triestine dialect, mixed into which are fragments and syntactic forms of German and Slovene —remote indeed from classical Italian. Svevo himself has sternly judged his relationship to "good Italian," as sternly as Kafka judged his relation to the German tongue. But Svevo's self-criti-

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Musil. I would rather agree with Michel David who calls Svevo *"Un provincial plus universel que la plupart de ses illustres contemporains,"* or with a recent opinion of Guido Piovene who wrote about the *Epistolario* ("La Stampa," 3.12.66): "Svevo ignored D'Annunzio and started with the *verismo* of the late 19th century, getting rid of its heaviness and using it for quite different effects. From realism he distills new acid vapors. There is in him a new tragic feeling and at the same time a music, a vital mirth, a poetry *in sordina* which our literature had not yet known. No other Italian novelist resembles him. If he belongs to any family, it would be the family of Chekhov and Gogol."

Svevo himself was quite aware of his "provincialism" and cultural limitations. Discussing in a letter to Valerio Jahier an obviously unfavorable comparison of his own books with Proust's, he writes: "Ours were utterly different destinies! His so much more fine than mine; a coarse man like myself could not possibly resemble the most perfect product of such a refined civilization."

But does Svevo really believe that a writer is only what his civilization and background permit him to be and that he stands to Proust as Trieste does to Paris? To Svevo a contemplative mind (and a writer for him is just a special case of a contemplative mind) would always be something else than a "product" of any given circumstances. I see in the quoted passage a genuine modesty and the recognition of a true superiority, but also a diffident hint of something else. Of his own evident "inferiority" Svevo is nearly convinced, but perhaps not quite.

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cism is more justified and does not have the character of gratuitous self-castigation. And yet, that impoverished language, often "incorrect" in its syntax and vocabulary, is it only the product of a deficiency? Svevo did not know well the Italian literature of his day. Among contemporaries, only Pirandello suited him. He had read diligently Machiavelli and Guicciardini, and only his father's bankruptcy prevented him from going to live in Florence to familiarize himself with "Tuscan." The first character created by Svevo, Alfonso Nitti, hero or "anti-hero" of *A Life,* scrutinizes his reading matter for expressions that Petrarch would not have used. Svevo's sincere doubts about his own style are apparent in his letters to friends whom he asks to go over his writings.[3]

Yet, from the outset of his literary career, Svevo was the enemy of fine writing. For him, literature is an investigation of the real, a quest for truth, and he rejected all formal beauty. In a letter of 1908 to his daughter Laetitia, then aged ten, he writes "Abasso i poeti!" and he illustrates this exclamation with a little tale. Of two carpenters, one makes cupboards and the other describes them; both in the wood used and in the manner of fabrication, these cupboards become stranger and stranger, until he pretends to be making living cupboards that feed on clothes. "You see," Svevo concludes, "that's how things are. You describe a bit this way, a bit that way, and in the end nothing is real."

[3] On his relation to the Italian language and the beginning of his fame in a foreign country, Svevo writes to Giuseppe Prezzolini (November 21, 1925): "I am hopeful that I shall become known in Italy. At first I had given up and by my own silence approved everyone else's. I then had the luck to find these generous Frenchmen whose strong praise staggered me. I do not deny that I thought (without, however, saying so, in order not to harm myself) that they appreciated me all the more because they did not have a subtle enough understanding of our language. After all, I have grown up in a region where till seven years ago our dialect was our true language. My prose could only be what it is and, alas, it is too late now to get my legs straightened."

When speaking of other writers, Svevo is always self-disparaging and often clowning. Thus in a letter written in English to Cyril Drucker in March, 1927, on his preparation of a lecture on James Joyce, he writes: "Of *Ulysses* I knew only very few pages, of which I talked a great deal, in order to make them appear more. I was now obliged to read it; and set to work immediately. I got home. It was simply awful. Whole phrases remained for a long time a mystery to me, and the vocabulary did not help me very much. . . .The worst of it was that the reading of the book lasted so long that when I reached the end I had quite forgotten the beginning."

Svevo's perceptive remarks on Joyce prove that in this letter he does not do justice to his critical understanding. He comments, however, often with self-confidence, and even pride, on his own novels: "I wrote *Una Vità* at a time when several novelists wrote differently but not better than I did, and sometimes wrote too well" (Letter to Enrico Rocca, April 1927).

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His own literature could be "true" only if it remained "anti-literary"—which it was, if one is to accept the opinion of Giulio Caprin cited above. It is a literature in which a word never suggests the *other:* every word is weighed in its nexus with things, and, beyond that, in its quality of micro-action or action-substitute. "Language offers satisfactions to a small part of the organism. It simulates a battle, when the battle is already over and lost. It wants to wound and caress. It moves among immense transferences, and if the words are incandescent, they burn the one who pronounced them."

Zeno makes fun of the psychiatrist who took his confessions at face value:

> The doctor believes a bit overmuch in these blessed confessions. He won't return them to me for corrections. But, good God! having studied only medicine, he has no idea what an effort it is to write Italian for those of us who speak (but do not know how to write) in dialect. A written confession is always mendacious, and we, it's with each Tuscan word that we lie! One will choose to relate what is easily expressed, and will set aside a fact because it's too much trouble to consult a dictionary. . . . There you have exactly what governs our choice when we insist on one episode from our life rather than another. It will be understood that in dialect our story would no longer have the same aspect.

And he provides an example:

> It seems that the doctor made an inquiry also into the subject of Guido. He maintains that, chosen by Adelina, he could not have been such as I describe him. He has discovered close by the spot where our psychoanalytical sessions took place a vast stockpile of wood that had belonged to the firm Guido Speier & Co. Why had I never mentioned it?
>
> Why? So as not to aggravate the difficulties of an already extremely difficult exposé. This omission proves merely that a confession written by me, in Italian, could be neither complete nor sincere. In a stockpile like that there exists an innumerable variety of woods, which we designate in Trieste by barbarisms borrowed from our dialect, from Croatian, from German, from French even (for example, *zapin,* taken from the word *sapin,* but which no longer has the same meaning). Where would I have found the proper vocabulary? I would have had to go to Tuscany, and there, old as I am, look for work with a wood merchant. By the way, the woodpile of the firm Guido Speier & Co. never yielded anything but losses.

Now, this example—and this is truly Svevian—fails to convince,

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for the relationship of Svevo and Zeno is not one of identity but of ironic distancing. If Zeno has concealed the existence of this great reserve of wood, it must surely have been for reasons other than linguistic insufficiency. By 1926, an Italian critic, Umberto Morra, had correctly perceived Svevo's relation to his language. "The defects are so evident that the first judgment passed on these books will always be a condemnation: they are badly written . . . But we note a peculiar obsession with not learning, the fear that a surer writing routine would be only a mask." Svevo's language has been termed "Triestine merchants' esperanto," but it always had to be admitted that Svevo achieves a very special precision and power of suggestion, that he finds expressions that are striking, transparent, appropriate to the capturing of the most complex psychological phenomena.

He was by no means indifferent to language. "The word does not merely express. It has a weight, and it has been possible to maintain that our character is formed more by what we say than by what we think." Svevo avoids all play with assonance. "Perhaps," he writes in a study devoted to Joyce, "it is an effect of our destiny that we cannot sufficiently play with words, that they should be our masters rather than our servants." But one could equally assert that punning carried to the point of linguistic mystique makes the word master, whereas Svevo, if he does not exactly dominate language, is not dominated by it either. Today, the "incorrect" Italian of Svevo passes for a model of writing. It has loosened the tongue of a whole new Italian literature—I am thinking of Pavese, of Vittorini, and even of Silone—which unmasks rhetoric and has only an ironic relationship to the great sonorous flights. Besides, it is less the vocabulary of the Triestine dialect than the German syntax that makes Svevo's language so personal to Italian ears.

It is the marginal Italian of the cosmopolitan Austro-Hungarian port—that language so different from "good Italian"—that furnished Svevo with his instrument for particular psychological analysis, and also for irony toward that analysis. A language without artifice, sober, was most apt to convey comic situations, not only those born of the contrast between rhetoric and reality, but also those which, beyond language, are comic by virtue of their situation—what could be called "clown's" comedy, if we recall that Zeno has often been judged "Chaplinesque." It is in comedy

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that Svevo best realized himself. And it is there, too, that one can best sense an evolution. In each of his three novels there is a personage whom we see from within, facing a world seen from without. This difference of perspective is most strongly marked in the first book, *A Life*. Only Alfonso Nitti seems to practice introspection, step back from things, while all others appear as emanations of a blind and elemental will to live; they are unable to put themselves to the question. Alfonso Nitti is "inept" at living and commits suicide. The others succeed or fail in their careers, plot, perish, but they derive their criteria from life itself and not, like Nitti, from a view of life, from a critical stance. *A Life* unfurls as yet along the mainstream of naturalism, where different milieus —banking, the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry—are scrutinized fairly systematically. It was needful for Svevo to kill Nitti in order for him, afterward, to make Emilio and Zeno live.

In *As a Man Grows Older,* the contrast between Emilio and his sculptor friend Stefano is no longer so pronounced. Stefano, whom no success has crowned, but who is sure nevertheless of his art, proclaims aesthetic principles that are those of Svevo himself. Emilio's sick sister is also seen from the inside, and not only through Emilio's eyes. *A Life* is rich in proto-comic situations, but they are lived out without humor, as they must be lived by a young man like Alfonso. If Emilio, at thirty-five, is presented as an aging man—Svevo finally entitled his novel *Senilità* [in English, *As a Man Grows Older*], although he first wanted to call it "Emilio's Carnival"—the precocious decrepitude manifests itself in the deliberate gap between action and observation, in the progressive movement of disillusionment, in Emilio's becoming aware that he wants to conquer the "flirt" Angiolina (we shall find a girl of this type in Moravia's *The Empty Canvas* and in Dino Buzzati's *A Love Affair)* only to provide himself with a source of warmth, invaded as he is by his own internal cold, and to acquire that elemental vitality of which he feels himself deprived, but with which, ultimately, he will be able to do nothing, because nothing in him really demands it. Love as an experiment and as cure by rejuvenation, what can it be if not an old man's love? Thus Emilio already heralds Zeno, the "vecchione," the "vegliardo," who will secure for themselves the possession of girls by means of money and gifts, and will try to convince themselves that they are

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performing for the girls a paternally educational mission. "Starting with a certain age, all passion passes through paternity."

The greater the inner coldness, the nearer the natural end, and the more sexuality, in Svevo, becomes the subject of tragicomedy: the eternal return is experienced as an unending search for novelty. In love, the "old man" endeavors not to see himself as the conquered or bought girls see him, but the effort remains unsuccessful. Zeno is greatly surprised that Felicita, the proprietress of a tobacco shop, should repeat to him, "I assure you you don't disgust me." He hadn't given it a thought, and he replies spontaneously, "You don't disgust me either"—and Felicita bursts out laughing. The fairly horrible comedy that Svevo extracts from the relation between sexuality and senility arises from the difference in response between the partners, each of whom, because of what he expects from the relationship, applies himself to playing the role that would best meet the other's expectations.

Like all great humor, Svevo's emerges from where tragedy is born: from love, old age, death. Distance is established when existence is flat against the immediate, close enough to be gasping for breath.

Georg Lukács, in his recently published *Aesthetics,* stresses the kinship between Kafka and Chaplin. In the very sense in which Lukács means it, this kinship applies also to Svevo. Zeno is a bourgeois clown. For him, clumsiness becomes destiny. In the most celebated episode of *Zeno,* the marriage proposal, Zeno sets himself successively, in a single evening, to conquering three sisters: first the most beautiful, whom he loves; then the youngest; and, finally, by accident, Augusta, the squint-eyed, whom he is then obliged to marry. In this scene it is apparent, too, that, except for the "inept" Nitti, Svevo's heroes do not undergo true "defeats," but that, on the contrary, they stumble onto happiness over failed actions and accidents—for Augusta will be for him the ideal spouse.

Another example of this felicitous stumbling: in the last chapter of the novel, Zeno is caught unawares by the war as he is picking roses; he cannot go home, he is dragged off on journeys, he throws himself into speculations and makes a fortune. And Mario Samigli, the failed novelist, victim of the "hoax," also

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profits by the war, for he banks the phoney draft from the imaginary publisher, and buys it back with Austrian crowns since devaluated, thus realizing a tidy profit to console him for his misfortune.

Whereas Augusta, conquered by Zeno (without his wanting it) will be for him a marvelous helpmeet; the beauteous Ada, who rejected his advances, is disfigured by Basedow's disease; and Zeno's rival whom she marries, Guido Speier, the capable fellow, makes bad business deals and ends up the victim of a ridiculous suicide meant to have been only simulated—an episode which, in turn, will be a scene of high comedy. It is in *Zeno,* too, that we encounter numerous scenes of macabre humor, such as the burial of Guido Speier. Zeno and his colleague Nilini are immersed in so passionate a conversation about the stock market that they get involved in another funeral procession headed for another cemetery:

> When we got to the point where, habitually, the carriages stopped, Nilini stuck his head through the door and emitted a cry of astonishment. The carriage was still following the cortège wending its way to the Greek cemetery.
>
> "—Was Mr. Speier Greek, then?" he inquired.
>
> Indeed, we had left behind the Catholic cemetery and were off to some other burial ground—Jewish, Greek, Protestant or Serbian.
>
> "—Perhaps he was a Protestant," I murmured at first.
>
> But no! He had definitely been married in the Church. Then I exclaimed, "They must be making a mistake!" thinking that they were going to bury him in someone else's grave.
>
> Suddenly Nilini burst into laughter, uncontrollable laughter that hurled him exhausted to the depths of the carriage, his hideous mouth wide open. "—We were wrong!" he shouted.
>
> As soon as he could restrain his hilarity, he covered me with reproaches. I should have known where we were going, been cognizant of the time . . . Here we were participating in the funeral of an unknown.
>
> I was no more in a mood for laughter than I was disposed to accept his reproaches. Why hadn't he, for his part, opened his eyes? I hid my displeasure, for the stock market mattered more to me than the obsequies. We got out of the carriage to orient ourselves, and took the path to the Catholic cemetery. The cab was following us. The members of the other dead man's cortège looked at us with surprise. Doubtless they could not explain to themselves why, after having honored the deceased with our presence up to the entrance of his final resting place, we were dropping him at the finest moment.
>
> Nilini, impatient, was walking ahead. He asked the gatekeeper:

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"—Has Mr. Speier's funeral procession arrived yet?"

The gatekeeper remained unastonished by this rather comic question. He answered that he knew nothing about it.

One is reminded of the demise of the friend, Copler, who, being sick, is visited by Zeno and discovered dead. Thence Zeno goes off to dinner at his father-in-law's, and in order not to spoil the evening, pretends that Copler is "doing much better." But he gets drunk and describes Copler's death. Very embarrassed by this blunder, he then declares that it was only a joke. At last, Zeno remarks pensively:

> I was never "his" again: I wasn't even present at his funeral. We had so much to do at home and in town that there was not an hour to be spared for him. Sometimes he was spoken of at table, but only as a joke, in memory of that dinner at which, half drunk, I had several times killed and resurrected him. It even became an adage in the family. If it happened that a newspaper announced and then denied someone's death, we would say, "It's like poor Copler."

Other comic situations take off from sickness, from suffering. Zeno begins to limp the moment a friend explains to him how many muscles are needed to set the foot in motion (we grasp then why Svevo chose the name Zeno). And this limp becomes an ailment that will never leave him. Likewise, the triple marriage proposal is made more comic by Zeno's passing the evening in hobbling from one girl to the other.

The comic in Svevo, then, is the relation of a social reality to a corporeal reality, whether it is a case of love, disease, or death. And discourse is only one of the means—not always the most significant—with which this false relation is realized.

Alongside of situational comedy, there is the one that flows from verbiage, from description, and which affects only the reader. In contradistinction to situational comedy, perceptible to the very persons in the story, one could here speak of humor. Thus Zeno, intoxicated, finds himself next to his sister-in-law Alberta, who wants to know his views on love, and he tells her:

> "A woman is an object whose price varies a good deal more than that of any commodity on the market."
>
> Alberta did not get my meaning very well. She thought that I was expressing the banal truism that a woman's worth varies with her age. I made myself clearer: a woman's worth may be great in the morning, zero at noon, very great a little later, and distinctly

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> negative in the evening. I explained the concept of negative value: a woman takes on negative value when a man reckons within himself what sum he would pay gladly to know her far away from him.

Alberta being incapable of understanding this reflection, he illustrates it in a very direct manner, and comedy of expression becomes situational comedy.

A more indirect humor characterizes the fragment entitled "Short Sentimental Journey," and the evocation of Laurence Sterne by this title is all the more significant. The insurance company inspector who, on the train, engages Aghios in conversation, speaks of the low prices of commodities during his youth. "He caresses his low prices," thinks Mr. Aghios, "as if they were his dear deceased parents."

The psychoanalyst for whom Zeno writes his confession is a source of continuous humor, for *Zeno* is a psychoanalytical novel, but also one that makes fun of psychoanalysis. When the doctor imparts to Zeno, in the wake of his confessions, certain solemn verities, Zeno thinks:

> I prefer laughing about these asininities to discussing them. Which did not prevent the doctor, while proffering them, from assuming his air of Christopher Columbus disembarking in the New World. What a man! Realizing that I had had the desire to go to bed with two very beautiful women, he gravely asked himself for what reasons. Who but he could have invented questions like that?

Svevo considered psychoanalysis a marvelous discovery because of its double relationship—conscious and unconscious—to humor, all the more so as sexuality was at the center of its thought. Psychoanalysis is at once a manifestation of and occasion for mistrust —occasion because it relies too much on words. For Svevo, basically, psychoanalysis is literature, and, for that reason, suspect like all literature. But in the same way that his antiliterary novels belong to literature. his anti-Freudian commentaries stay in the domain of psychoanalysis.[4]

[4] For Svevo's attitude toward Freud one should read his letters of 1928 to Valerio Jahier. An exhaustive study on the subject of psychoanalysis in its relation to the work of Svevo and other writers in Trieste can be found in Michel David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana,* (Boringhieri, 1966), 373-440. Svevo knew very well two persons who had undergone psychoanalytical treatment with disastrous effects, and he thought that Freud's discoveries meant more to literature than to the cure of mental disease. Nevertheless, he, the translator of Freud's essay on dreams, believed or pretended to believe that Freud would appreciate *Zeno* as a writer's contribution to psychoanalysis. Could he have been unaware that the psychoanalyst in this novel is a figure of fun, and that Zeno Cosini's self-analysis ignores

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For Svevo, psychology and irony merge. He has the feeling that "the *I* is the most important being in this whole vast world," but also that the world knows nothing about it. The immense and uprooting events lived by the *I* can be "distanced" by psychology, as can the banal and mundane events happening to "just anybody." The *I,* that unique face, is itself only a mask. Nothing is so impersonal, so rigorously subject to laws, as is perfect egocentricity. The truly personal factor is the ability to bypass egocentricity slightly, to observe oneself with irony. It is not a method of changing this *I*; but since another Being is not possible, at least another Way of Looking. . . .

From his first writings on, Svevo inserts into his tales reflections *on the enjoyment of pain or of the recollection of pain.* "The sensation of having to be much happier now than he was a few minutes before was not pleasing to him. For pain, especially when it is past, has a fascinating force of attraction, and, for weak natures, it is a satisfaction to become submerged in it." *(A Life.)* In "Short Sentimental Journey," Aghios meditates: "Pain remembered is not always pain. At present, he felt in it the intensity of life. Ah! why couldn't he feel again that impatience and that pain! What a new lease on life!"

To be set free from pain, then, is not happiness. Similarly, the analysis of the cause of a malady does not set one free from it. "Strange that the analyzing of the causes of a too painful sentiment should not suffice to destroy or even to shade it! It could be the matter of a misunderstanding, a reparable error, a moment's blindness, a word. But after the analysis, all is as before: a pain, a setback, a passionate desire."

Svevo has spoken of psychoanalysis in these terms:

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his childhood, his mother, and has much less relation to Freud than the pessimism of *A Life* had to Schopenhauer?

Michel David is primarily concerned with psychoanalysis as it penetrated Italian culture, and does not fully explore its implications for Svevo. There are at least three different aspects to be considered: a) the new way of exploring "anti-literary" truth; b) the new danger of superimposing pat formulas on individual situations; and c) the further danger of creating a two-edged instrument, since psychoanalysis may destroy a "disease" which intellectually is worth more than any cure. Would not mental health, as restored by the analyst, mean the loss of the "sick" and oblique attitude to "real life" so essential to the one who contemplates? The greatest virtue of the writer remains linked to failure rather than to the kind of success which a cured mental patient could expect. "You may be right," Svevo wrote to Valerio Jahier, "to think that the benefits one might get from psychoanalysis could be counterbalanced by the harm it does."

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> What writer could renounce thinking of psychoanalysis? I got to know it in 1910. My neurotic friend rushed to Vienna to undergo treatment. The knowledge I thus acquired was the only happy consequence of his therapy. He let himself be analyzed for two years and came back utterly undone, abouliac as before, but his aboulia henceforth aggravated by his conviction that he was so constituted and could not be otherwise. *(Saggi e pagine sparse,* p. 175; published posthumously.)

To unmask a hidden social relationship is not yet a revolution: to unmask the artifices of a psychology is not yet a metamorphosis. To clarify, to transform: for Svevo, these realms remain perfectly distinct. He removed from his work the dimension of the future; what concerns him is clarification directed toward the past, and not transformation brought to bear on the coming. If the dimension of futurity does exist for him, it is solely in order to apprehend the past from the standpoint of the present in its possibilities and its indeterminacy, at the point where it is open and not yet fatality. The present is a hypothesis; the past remains charged with the unknowable.

If the future as such is missing from Svevo's work, it is because the old man plays a bigger part in his work than he has in all previous literature. (Beckett, and Faulkner, in some aspects of his work, are also writers of old age.) One can legitimately compare Svevo to Joyce and Proust on the one hand, and to Kafka, Schnitzler, and Musil, on the other, but this particular remains Svevo's own. For Stephen Daedalus, Marcel, Josef K., Anatol, Ulrich are young or just barely ripening men.

Alfonso Nitti, the only young man in Svevo's *oeuvre,* experiences a difficulty of being: life and he himself collaborate on his destruction, less so by the pressure of threatening forces in society than because these forces find in him the complicity of a lack of will to live, of a corrosive doubt that urges him toward renunciation. By suicide, Nitti amputates his future. Emilio, in *As a Man Grows Older,* is already an old man in the making, even though he is only thirty-five. In the letters that Svevo, then aged forty, was writing to his wife, he speaks of himself as a man already on the threshold of ripe old age; he lavishes on his wife paternal advice—notably that she should remarry upon his death. Since Lao-Tse, whom his mother, according to legend, carried for eighty years, and who was born white-haired, there has probably

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not been such a "born old man," for it is in the works of his old age that Svevo found fulfillment. The "Zeno after Zeno" of his last narratives, and the nameless "old man" complete Svevo's world, along with those few figures that recur as regularly as the masks of the commedia dell'arte: the hussy, the worthy wife, the friend bursting with obscene vitality.

In his final tales, Svevo abandons any attempt to individualize: there are now only silhouettes, ciphers, that remind one of the *nouveau roman*. Why the masks? In his ripe old age, man lives repetitions rather than the unique, but Svevo's old men are by virtue of this all the more avid for new and unique experiences. The older Svevo gets, the more his personages resemble one another, and the more he takes his distance by means of abstraction, by ironic generalizations with which the tale is shot through. His old men seek exclusively one more renewal of the "warmth" of life, albeit well aware that this quest ends in the grotesque. Today when gerontology has become a science, and when the world contains more old people (and more young ones) than ever—one recalls the apocalyptic vision of the overpopulated world at the close of *Zeno!*—Svevo looms as one of the first explorers of that darksome country that is old age.

Svevo had not the pitiless judgment of Knut Hamsun, who, in his nineties, wrote in his last book, "Advanced age brings no wisdom, old age has only itself to bring,"—but down to his last stories, his last letters, Svevo does not for an instant fudge this reality, he nurtures no illusion. There is humor, breeziness and—let us say it, although Svevo did not care for modish terms—an existential awareness of aging, which, for him, is an experience of incomparable potency, even if it is a matter of impotence, and a repertoire of new possibilities (or lacks). Above all, aging permits one to see different ages in a new perspective.

In his last (unfinished) novel, *The Old Man*, begun in the summer of 1928 (Svevo died on September 13 from the consequences of an auto accident), we can read the following:

> I continue to struggle between past and present, but at least hope does not intrude any more, the anguished hope for the future. In consequence, I always live in a mixed time, for that is man's destiny; yet grammar knows of pure times, which seem to be made for the animals, which, when they are not frightened, live in a crystalline present. But for the old man (well, yes! I am an old man, it is the

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> first time I am saying it, and it is the first benefit from my new aptitude for concentration) the amputation by which life loses what it never possessed, the future, simplifies his existence, even if it makes it so denuded of meaning as to tempt one to tear out his last remaining hairs. . . . I have meditated so long about this problem that even my inactive life has provided me with the chance for an experiment that could be clarified if it were repeated with finer instruments, which is to say by putting in my place someone more skilled in precise observations.

And here are the concluding lines of this fragment:

> To be old, the livelong day, without a moment's respite! And with each instant to grow older yet! I accustom myself painfully to being what I am today, and tomorrow I must resume the effort to reënsconce myself in my seat grown still more uncomfortable. Who can deny me the right to speak, to shout, to protest? All the more so as protest is the shortest path to resignation.

In "The Nice Old Man and the Pretty Girl," a friend wants to convince the old man that advanced age is in itself an illness, but earns this answer: "The old man is merely weak. He is nothing other than a young man grown weak." And, in another tale, this reflection: "Strange! I feel so young and am at the same time so different from the young man I was! Could this be old age?"

Old age, then, is that experience that could not be deduced from anything if one did not feel it: "If there were no old men in this world, it would be impossible to imagine that from the rosy face of the child expressing all of life still inchoate there would emerge this hard pasteboard face whose lines life traces one after the other without any care for harmony, these lines of which some may signify a perhaps painful thought, others the suffering of the flesh itself that twists and becomes misshapen because it is over- or underfed. All these scars that efface the original traits, unless they make of them, in the same material, a caricature!"

To grow old is to diminish; but illness, the difficulty of living of the "inept" also constitute a diminution. Man then turns away from life, and everything goes on as if the vital process could be conveyed only thanks to this slowing down. In life, it is the representation of this aptitude for being, and not defeat, that interests Svevo. His sickly or hypochondriacal old men are, in truth, of a surprising vitality, thus the "veglione" who, twice a week, pays a visit to the proprietress of the tobacco shop. Zeno

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succeeds in his speculations: the bungler comes off better than the clever ones.

Is there a connection between this and Svevo's life? During long years he led a dreary existence as a minor bank employee, teacher in a trade school, analyst of the foreign press for a newspaper. Thereafter, through his marriage to the daughter of a wealthy industrialist, Veneziani, he was led into concerning himself with business, and ended up in the skin of a competent entrepreneur.

The parallel between this career and the lives of the characters in his books is obvious. But Svevo never made of failure a criterion of intellectuality. The man with artistic aspirations who is obliged to submit to the prosaic demands of a job appeared to him comic rather than touching. In the conflict between the bourgeois and the artist—on which Thomas Mann was to feed his work—Svevo is not on the artist's side; what interests him is the conflict, the opportunity for him to exercise his irony at the expense of the bourgeois and the artist alike. Failure is not the seal of a superior vocation, but success, in turn, is not the confirmation of a gift, nor necessarily the fruit of an activity. Svevo's personages meet with success in time of war, by virtue of troubled circumstances, through inflation, accidents, strokes of luck; these are gains stemming from a game at the edge of catastrophe. Thus the successes, in their disproportion to the effort, assume a character as comic as that of the failed actions and the chains of misfortune.

The old man maintains a distance proper to the observer, but can he cross this distance that relegates him, in other people's eyes, to his specificity of an old man? In "The Confessions of an Old Man," Zeno attempts to establish with his son Alfio better relations than those he had with his father. One remembers the "death of the father" in *Zeno,* which recalls Kafka's short story, "The Verdict"; in it, the dying man with a last—perhaps involuntary—gesture strikes his son: "I had prepared myself so much better than my father to understand the new, and yet I did not know how to put up with Alfio. He always said that between us there was even more than the difference in age, and that the war separated us. Yet it seemed to me that I was in a position to fathom this new world; and when I was treated as an imbecile, it made me furious."

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To prove to his son how well he understands him, Zeno buys from him one of his paintings. For Alfio is a modernist painter. And Zeno contemplates this canvas until it gets to mean something to him. But immediately thereafter he ruins everything he has just achieved. An old friend comes to see him, and with him Zeno cannot refrain from speaking humorously about this picture. "After all," he says to justify himself, "laughter is the last exercise permitted to an old man." When this friend asks him whether the canvas in question represents an earthquake, he answers that "before this catastrophe, the houses were exactly in the same state," and he explains how he had tried to straighten out these houses and people them by means of an intense contemplation. When Alfio defends his work, Zeno gets angry, calls him a cretin, and the long effort to communicate over the gap of generations is wiped out at a stroke:

> Strange, this rapport between fathers and sons! No amount of effort one may expend can save it. I who had always said that I knew nothing about painting was flying into a rage because my son was yelling that he was quite of the same opinion. . . . All the theories I had deduced from my relations with my father were of no avail, for toward him I had behaved quite differently. And yet I continued to be gentle and courteous. When, at table, a disagreement erupted, I always took Alfio's side. I gave him money when he asked me for it. I said nothing but sweet things to him. To be sure, I must have looked strange and not at all affectionate. While I caressed him, there was in me something like a howl: how good I am, how good I am! The feeling of being so good threatens to lead us into being less good.

Thus ripe old age is not wise renunciation, but distanced observation of what still unblemished vitality accomplishes. For Svevo, advanced age becomes what youth is to other writers: the laboratory of the vital process. Old age is not only a slowing down, but also, in relation to the future which tends toward zero, an extraordinary speeding up. "I am a rocket," says the "vecchione." In *The Confessions of Zeno,* illness was still conceived in the perspective of therapy, as a transitional stage that can be shortened or ignored, and not as the fundamental condition of life. With advanced age, it's something else again. Zeno, to be sure, does not become a sage. So little does he renounce that, in one of the tales, "Idleness," he evokes the Voronoff cure. And he

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asks himself whether, seeing a beautiful woman, one would not then feel compelled to climb the nearest tree.

The experience of advanced age is that one grows old for others, and through the gaze of others, for oneself. "All the other old men seemed to me much older than I was." To enunciate this reflection is already to deny it. Thus Zeno's objectivity can be traced back to the awareness of subjectivity. All phases of life (reflection, formulation, and, in this sense, "literature") become so many compensations and corrections brought to bear on the "life lie," a notion that reminds us how much Svevo, like Joyce, owes to the influence of Ibsen.

It can be said that all of Svevo's work deals with the relations between life and literature.[5] It is indeed the only relationship that does not exist solely through an ironic refraction and which, for this very reason, is the premise of irony.

Svevo is one of the fathers of that "existentialist" literature that sees in the event a mode of existence rather than a sequence of actions. He is at the antipodes from a literature of violence that seeks in paroxysm the proof of authentic existence rendered in the raw. The literature of expunged distance is the tendency that encompasses Hemingway, the cinema, action painting. But distance so lucidly experienced becomes a problem and prepares forthwith the future abolition of distance. In Beckett, this continuous examination, this self-observation, will become a *sotto voce* soliloquy.

Where mediation is so important, it is a question less of Being than of Perceiving, of passion than of humor, of the immediate

[5] The *Epistolario* (Dall'Oglio, 1966) has been issued as the first of four volumes of *Collected Works*. A book of 900 pages, it inexplicably lacks an index: this makes it impossible to find what Svevo wrote about Freud or Joyce, for instance, without perusing hundreds of pages. The *Epistolario*—like the diaries—has all the quality of "Svevian comedy" that one finds in the novels and stories. In one letter, for example, he analyses "these strange twin diseases of mine. The first, which I believe innate, is the incapacity to reach the immediate representation of any reality in the form in which others feel it. The second is a terror of my own idea which makes me unable to stay close to it for any length of time."

One of the many letters to his wife (July, 1897) shows particularly well—as the editor Bruno Meier points out—how the letters lead to the narrative prose. Here Svevo describes humorously the failure of his attempt to link literature and reality in the "experiment of marriage," and goes on: "I was created for rebellion, indifference, corruption, always excited by what could be and never obedient to what is." Svevo's interest in the "possible" as opposed to the "real" comes very close, indeed, to Musil's "conjecturalism" (a word which, I believe, Baudelaire was the first to use in this sense).

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than of stepping aside. In the game of past and present the absence of a future creates a limited space comparable to the Sartrean "wall," *"in camera,"* and "sequestration."[6] This narrow space partakes of the laboratory. It is understandable that it should have been precisely Sartre who said that Svevo represents Italy's most important contribution to modern literature. And also that Alain Robbe-Grillet claims him as precursor of the *nouveau roman,* because Zeno's time is "a sick time" and incarnates a consciousness for which nothing is natural any more:

> What Italo Svevo tells us is that in our modern society nothing is *natural* any more. And there is no reason even for being sad about it. We can perfectly well be happy, talk, make love, make deals, make war, write novels; but none of this will any longer be done without thinking, as one breathes. Every one of our actions reflects about itself and becomes loaded with questioning. Under our gaze, the simple gesture we make of stretching out our hand becomes bizarre, awkward; the words that we listen to ourselves pronouncing sound suddenly false; the time of our spirit is no longer that of the clocks; and novel writing, in its turn, can no longer be innocent.

One could trace another kinship: that between Svevo of the "micro-events" and Nathalie Sarraute. But the lost innocence of literature places Svevo more particularly among the descendants of Flaubert—with literature considered as a false consciousness reacting to literary creation. Svevo is as removed from Zeno the contemplator as the latter is from Zeno the doer, and there lies the source of his radical irony. It behooves us to admire that this double refraction does not stop the tale in its tracks. In this connection, one reads with interest the famous drunkard's vow in the *Diary,* in which Svevo renounces literature "once and for all"—as, hundreds of times, he renounces smoking, until, on his deathbed, he asks for his "last cigarette."

The complexity of reflection does not impair the naïveté of an action rich in comic situations which makes one think of Goldoni, a name it is right to invoke because Goldoni, who wrote in Venetian and French, likewise had an ambiguous relation with "Tuscan."

With his way of linking reality and the mask, reflection and force, Svevo could have been a playwright, and at least one of his plays, *The Misunderstanding*—which Camus intended to

[6] The reference here is to the French titles of works known in America as "The Wall," *No Exit,* and *The Condemned of Altona. (Tr.'s note.)*

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adapt—proves his gifts in this area where all encouragement was denied him. The theme of this play is yet another successful "hoax," but one which miscarries, because the servant who is supposed to frighten his master for laughs, actually kills him.

Despite his "Cacanian" cultural foundation, Svevo is certainly an Italian writer, by the fulgurating transition between reflection and situation. The distancing is created by "ineptitude," sickness, old age. Formally, it is a creation of style. But spatially, it is Svevo's destiny and is called Trieste. Trieste, province and cosmopolitan city, with Central Europe for hinterland, did not enjoy a cultural climate comparable to that of Prague, even though it produced poets and essayists of merit: Saba, Stuparich, Slataper, the "Anonymous of Trieste," and others I don't mention. Trieste was a port and a commercial center, and not a cultural focal point. Svevo will not frequent literary cafés like those of the Prague writers, but the Stock Exchange Café at the Tergesteo palace. Trieste is far from the cultural centers of the Empire, and from those of Italy as well, and Svevo, with a German father and Jewish-Italian mother, is a very Triestine mixture.

Did the Jewish origin play the same role in Svevo's life as it did in Kafka's? An important Italian critic, Giacomo Debenedetti, has insisted on interpreting Svevo altogether from this factor: his humor, his taste for fables and parables, his "shlemihls," his far-away gaze which makes him a stranger to the world he belongs to. Yet it seems to me difficult to attribute such importance to this factor. In his letters to his fiancée and (subsequently) wife—published in two volumes by Zibaldone—Svevo mentions occasionally that he belongs to the Jewish community, but rather as a pitcturesque element. One may, if one so desires, take into consideration the fact that both Svevo and Proust had Jewish mothers, and, above all, that Svevo was the inspiration for Joyce's Leopold Bloom. But what characterizes Svevo is not one of his numerous roots, it is their very diversity, the variety of factors, the mixture—the premise of critical objectivity, of distanced and humorous awareness of traditions and opinions. Every given is mediatized by its relation to some other given. An intelligence nourished by all high cultures—Russian, German, French and, thanks to Joyce, English and American—on an impoverished terrain, here is a fact that had to stress the distance between "life" and "spirit."

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Svevo was seeking Italian roots. But the mother hen refused to recognize a "Cucco" born from an incubator. And Italo Svevo, the "Italian Swabian," did not mix in his irredentist Italian patriotism with his literature. Nothing would have seemed more unsuitable to him than to write a "patriotic novel"—which Italian criticism would definitely have noticed. To the extent that, later on, Central European nationalisms were to turn out more enfeebled and fragile than the declining culture of the Hapsburg Empire, the writer of the periphery could assume a central position in modern culture.

To make of distance the motif of an *oeuvre* was attempted later, and by all manner of means and procedures, but ripe old age retains over all of them the advantage of the natural, precisely because more than all catastrophes—and *Zeno* ends with the evocation of a cosmic catastrophe—aging is the image of inexorable fate.

The (belated) influence of Svevo on Italian literature is considerable. By 1930 Guido Piovene records it, not without uneasiness: "One might ask oneself for the reasons of Svevo's success with so many young writers," he wrote in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Because for him—or "for us," as he then put it—Svevo remained "the prisoner of that ambiance of positivism which it is our most vital task, our most ardent hope to vanquish." The tranquil prose of Svevo survived this "task" and this "ardor." And Piovene himself—who was actually just the man to understand Svevo, once his political involvements were shaken off—has recently invoked, at the Leningrad colloquy, the Triestine writer as "the most remarkable case in Italy" of a novel "that has a traditional external appearance without really being that" (*Esprit,* July 1964: "Novel and Reality," p. 29).

But precisely because Svevo, the outsider, became father to an entire new literature and because his posthumous influence has been so powerful, it is remarkable that he should have remained alone—at least until Beckett—to explore the realm of old age, from the "aging" Emilio to the "vecchione," the "vegliardo," the "buon vecchio," the "Zeno after Zeno," and that he should have met the challenge: the transmuting into pure humor of the terror of existence, the cold and the dread of life without future.

[*Translated by John Simon*]

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JOHN LOGAN

# The Pass

Buttercups about the rocks and the sky
colored lupine lies

quiet in the brilliant grass
at Deception Island Pass.

My brother and his friends and I carefully
walk we

walk carefully along the edge
of the high flying bridge

and all look down
where gulls fall and rise over The Sound.

The awful height stirs in me
the huge, uneasy

gull
of my own soul.

I will not lean further
over the bridge's sill with my younger brother

(who can savor such a thrill). I will go back
and read the plaque

upon the rock.
But first I watch

a small, red speed boat hurry
beneath, pulling white, excited water flurries

like a living flag.
It passes a tug,

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black and brown
(newly painted green

door) moving sure
as an old shepherd goes, before

a tremendous family of floating logs.
I wait until the tug's

completely underneath the span
(by then

even the wake of the younger boat is gone)
and turn

to walk back
alone toward the rock.

## Sebastian in the Dream

*after Georg Trakl*

The mother carried her child in the white moonlight
In the shadow of the walnut tree and the ancient elder,
Drunk with the juice of poppy, with the lament of the thrush,
And silently,
With pity, a bearded face bent over them.

Gentle in the darkness of the window. All the old household goods
Of the fathers
Lay in ruin. Love and autumn's dreaming.

It was a dark day of the year in melancholy childhood
When the boy went down to the cool waters, to the silver fish,
To peace—and a face!
His star came over him in the gray night
As he threw himself like a stone before the black wild horses.

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Or when he walked in the evening
Across the autumn churchyard of Saint Peter's
Holding his mother's trembling hand—
In the dark of the vault a fragile corpse lay silent
And the child opened his cold eyes because of it.

He was a small bird in the barren branches.
The bell rang in nocturnal November.
Ah, the peace of the father when
He went down the winding, darkening stairs in his sleep.

The soul's tranquillity. A lonesome winter evening.
Dark figures of the shepherds by the old fishpond.
A little child in the hut of straw; how gently
The face recedes with the black fever.
Holy night.

And when the boy climbed silently up the gloomy Mount of Calvary
Holding the hard hand of his father,
And in the dark crevices of rock
The blue shape of The Man passed through his own legend,
Blood flowed purple from the wound under the heart.
Very quietly the Cross grew up in his shadowy soul.

Love. In the black corners the snow melts.
A blue breath of air, caught brightly in the old elder,
In the shaded arch of the walnut tree!
And his own glowing angel appeared to the boy gently.

Joy. When a sonata rang through the cool rooms at evening,
On the brown wooden beam
A blue butterfly crawled out of a silver cocoon.

Oh the nearness of death! Inside the stone wall
A yellow head bowed. The child was quiet
When the moon fell in March.

Glowing Easter bells in the grave of night
And the silver sounds of stars,

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So in a shuddering fit
A dark madness fell from the sleeper's face.

How quiet the walk down the blue river!—
Thinking of what has been forgotten while in the green branches
A thrush cries the ruin of an unknown thing.

And when the boy walked in the evening by the fallen walls of the city
At the old man's bony hand
And carrying a tiny, pink child in his black coat,
The ghost of the Evil One appeared in the shadow of the walnut tree!

Groping up the green stairs of summer. How softly
The garden falls down in the brown silence of autumn;
The fragrance and the sadness of the old elder tree
Where the silver voice of the angel died in Sebastian's shadow.

JON ANDERSON

## It is Morning; the Animals

It is morning; the animals
have come back, awake, amid seasons
of themselves. Walking under the arced boughs
and the moon, they have remembered
the dream they are living now,
and yesterday, and when the water
became more subtle, into marsh, and then land.
They come with only a little caution,
the lizard extending his tongue
into the dreamy sunlight, zebras
becoming blond, the raccoon
reaching into newness, toward death.

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One pale lion turns on its back,
dreaming in the grass which is bloodied
and bright. In his dream he says: *My friend.*

And it is true. Each animal
stands in its green contemplative room,
even in blood, in daylight to the ears,
saying: *My friend. Be calm.*
*You are forgiven, even*
*unto death.* The lion
places his soft paw
on the shoulder of a man:
*This is my peaceable son;*
*my fond intention, dreaming,*
*even unto death.* The sun blazes.

The animals lie down.
Everywhere the ground trembles
with their muscular sleep.
The man disappears, as though
he was not ever in that house at all,
but was invisible, or asleep,
deep in the lion's dark belly,
or was the lion, dreaming of him.

# Voyage

*for Joseph de Roche*

So, at last, we will cross.
Our season presupposes continents, lands
of desire. We toss
like unloved baggage where we stand,

and slowly the land gives over.
*Good-bye; good-bye.*
The water
rises and hisses; distance simplifies

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trees, houses. The small land speeds.
And we escape.

Here is your flying sea,
proportionless, your seascape

hung with birds, your frail launch
lightly bearing us in mist.
Everything's touch;
immediate. We had this

journeying at heart; yes, days
of it, weeks, buoyant, propelled.
The casual waves
blur like lines cast back. We have ourselves

out here; what else?
Birds fail. The sea shines
daily, is calm and—who can tell?—
bottomless. There will be time.

And here I awakened into fear—
a destination, as your own;
an inlet, where
the waters shine

in welcome, where the journey
cries out: *Here,* where stones, enormous,
lie in the sea.
The shoreline rises

like our own intention, real.
Here is your consummate island;
mine. The air fills,
black with leaves. The launch glides inland.

We stand in this full calm;
a journey's
end, sense of the darkening home.
My friend: foreshadow me.

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PATRICIA LOW

# The First Day of the Hunting Moon

Father, on the first day of the Hunting Moon,
after we stood the shocks up in the field,
after we tore the walnuts from their skins,
you sent me with a basket up Thunder Hill.
There were no berries in the Hunting Moon;
the hill dripped sunset and red leaves,
and far below me, squatting by a wigwam shock,
the Old One cleaned the plow for spring.

On the first day of the Long Night Moon,
while sunset shivered on the hill, we wrapped
the Old One with his people in the second snow.
Father, the Hunger Moon is here.
Where are the sacks of corn we shucked,
the tubs of walnuts, and the meat we hung?
Already our people from their burying ground
whine down on the wind off Thunder Hill.
Father, there were no berries in the Hunting Moon;
there are no sunsets now, and I am cold.

# Wet Weather

Do you look for a rainbow, Love, in this wet weather,
while water reels in the wagon tracks out by the barn?
Last week the floodgate splintered in the stampede
of the creek; and this morning, Love, over on the west,
rain still whimpers in the ditch along the fence,
the creek still growls in its banks.

Remember, Love, last Indian summer when the sun,
sifting through hickories, latticed the ground?
We sat on the bank and watched slow raindrops

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dimple the creek. Climbing the floodgate,
we ran over damp leaves to chase a rainbow home.

In this milkglass weather, Love, rain hammers
sockets in the furrows out in the field;
down on the south *forty,* brown corn silks
lay like squirrel tails dropped at skinning.
O, there'll be no rainbows, Love, in *this* wet weather.
A sun, in this wash, would run and fade on the sky.

# Elegy

Never doubt I loved you
if now you sometimes ponder on such things.
I loved you with that violence the wind has
when it leaps from the southeast pasture,
whips across the field and snaps the goldenrod;
I loved you with that whisper of its breath
when, breaking on the twilled ground of the hollow,
it falls among the trees there.

Never doubt I would have followed you
to your damp sleep. I ran after you—
but where the creek turns to stagger
through the west woods, a March bird chortled
in the willows; and under the bridge
ice broke from itself, and stumbled out to the sun.

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HAROLD WITT

# Walking Milwaukee

At the end of everything, I walk Milwaukee
between the elms cathedraling the blocks
and hotbox houses in the muggy weather—
over to Sherman, or drive to Brown Deer Park.
No one is there to glide the moss but ducks
and under birch and willow only us

to walk in clover, sweating as we walk
with Grandma and the babies by the pond—
who would have thought, in summer hot Milwaukee,
we'd find green vacancies at six o'clock?—
but yesterday I saw a rabbit hop,
as if through grass, across a concrete street

as I was walking, thinking as I walked,
and saw a squirrel flitting up a trunk
while fattened housewives talked among their lawns—
this One Way flatness wildly overflowing
its sober German rules and regulations—
madness of beer, preponderance of paunch.

I walk the miles of square and ugly blocks,
scanning the bricks for out-of-place clematis—
a purple tropic climbing up a string—
drive miles to look at Wright's Greek Orthodox
crown round church, beneath whose darkblue dome,
above eye windows, thorns are waterspouts—

a far out marvel; no one would have thought
concrete could flow so rightly in a ring
except a mind in bitter anguish caught

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seeing such blocks of boxed-in suffering—
SCHLITZ signs sizzle, DON'T WALK goes on and off
at this hot endless end of everything.

Past Silver Spring—the names sound meadow cool—
we walk and talk on Grandpa's clovered grave—
death of a salesman—Grandpa sold the lots—
the carving on the stone is "beautiful"—
we talk above him on Valhalla's plots,
smelling the smoke from backyard barbecues—

who will lie where when similarly boxed;
a later generation climbs the stones
over the rigid burghers locked below.
Grandma says the trees, because the roots
would crack the coffins, can't be planted close.
Whom are the plastic flowers meant to fool?

I have to walk—through smogs of Fond du Lac—
the name is lovely, but the street goes on
past smoke black bricks, past churches pointing up
to nothing but a boiling murkiness—
thundering dark about to split and drop
gutterflooding water that won't help—

the lightning seems to dramatize a god
whose wise displeasure makes the hailstones bounce,
but soon it's over and I walk again
through heated green beside Menomonee River—
(along the banks, because of antique drains
polluting purity, dead fish glitter)—

and on and on, beside the dying elms
(a blight is killing them the city over)
arching a Paradise, to hear Grandma tell,
under the willows, in the parks of clover
I walk Milwaukee in the still hot weather
and think of Dante sweating through his hell.

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ROBERT HASS

# Book Buying in the Tenderloin

A statuary Christ bleeds sweating grief
In the Gethsemane garden of St. Boniface Church
Where empurpled Irish winos lurch
To their salvation. When incense and belief
Will not suffice: ruby port in the storm
Of muscatel-made images of hell
The city spews at their shuffling feet.
In the Longshoreman's Hall across the street
Three decades have unloaded since the fight
To oust the manic Trotskyite
Screwballs from the brotherhood. All goes well
Since the unions closed their ranks,
Boosted their pensions, and hired the banks
To manage funds for the workingman's cartel.
Christ in plaster, the unions minting coin,
Old hopes converge upon the Tenderloin
Where Comte, Considerant, Fourier,
Are thick with dust in the two-bit tray
Of cavernous second-hand bookstores
And the streets suffuse the ten-cent howl
Of jukebox violence, just this side of blues.
Negro boy-whores in black tennis shoes
Prowl in front of noisy faggot bars.
Like Samuel Gompers, they want more
On this street where every other whore
Is painfully skinny, wears a bouffant,
And looks like a brown, slow-blooming annual flower.
In the places that I haunt, no power
To transform the universal squalor
Nor wisdom to withstand the thin wrists
Of the girls who sell their bodies for a dollar
Or two, the price of a Collected Maeterlinck,
The sky glowers. My God, it is a test,
This riding out the dying of the West.

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THOMAS P. WOLFE

# The Blakean Intellect

WILLIAM BLAKE, D. H. LAWRENCE REMARKED in his *Studies in Classic American Literature,* was one of those "obscene Knowers," like Poe. Blake is only a little like Poe, and not at all obscene; but Lawrence here, as is the case most of the times when he is wrong, nonetheless manages in his characteristically uncanny way to put his finger on something central to the figure he discusses. Blake *was* a *knower;* and Lawrence, with whom Blake has such striking affinities, has located the point that marks an essential difference between them. Because Blake's world is so uniquely his own creation, there is nothing in that world that the poet doesn't know—no associations, no illusions to powers or presences, that are outside his ken, beyond his comprehension. Blake's reverence and wonder before the living creation is not the wonder that issues from a mind awed by a presence too great to comprehend, but a wonder at a greatness of which it knows, for the very reason that the imagination has perceived (conceived?) it. The mind of the poet is always equal potentially to the infinitude of the world it creates. Lawrence, for himself, will maintain no illusions about the possibilities for the infinite transcendence of the self.

It is not that Blake's extraordinary powers of intellect have been overlooked, for that would be nearly impossible. But too often when they are noticed, and admired, it is as a quality of accidental significance, as something apparently not essential to the poetic achievement. This is an attitude that derives, I suppose, from the old argument between the disciplines of philosophy and art: we are told to be wary of the too-literary philosophers—they must have lost sight of their business; at the same time, the poet who "thinks" too much is likely to do so at the expense of his "poetic" effort. It is something of this sense of a hostility between philosophy and poetry that has driven even such a distinguished sensibility as F. R. Leavis to a critical position in the case of Blake—a position he need not have taken—from which, one can't help but feel, he will be rendered incapable of an adequate response to Blake's peculiar powers. Leavis is undoubtedly right in insisting that too great a concern with Blake's work as a system of sym-

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bolical philosophy can make us insensitive to the "language of poetry"; and insofar as he has counteracted that tendency, we are in his debt. But what Leavis has not done, and to my surprise seems not to have been done generally, is to locate in Blake's poetry those compelling qualities which we feel due to an immense strength of mind. The closest Leavis comes—the closest he can now perhaps *allow* himself to come—to this, is in emphasizing Blake's "extraordinary precision." And what I would want to have allowed further, is that, while one surely need not be a philosopher to appreciate Blake, the "extraordinary precision" to which we respond in some of his best work is not so very different from the decidedly "aesthetic" (if I may be allowed the use of that dangerous term) response we make to the precision of much philosophy. It is our sense of an intellect in absolutely sure possession of its materials—the material of a large body of interrelated ideas; of a mind ready to *demonstrate,* in its manner, that its conception is true. And consequently, if one wishes to argue that Blake failed in his latest prophetic work, one might as correctly indicate the problem by saying, not, with T. S. Eliot, that he left poetry behind for the sake of "intellectual" argument, or "ideas," but that the failure of the poetry rests finally in the failure of the intellect to achieve the task it has set for itself.

I should like to examine first a few passages from "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"; and since the form of that poem might invite the accusation that I had made things easy for myself, I shall look also at "Visions of the Daughters of Albion"; which, while being "poetic" enough to satisfy the "skeptics," shares, I think, much of the same *kind* of force as "Marriage."

The Voice of the Devil

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles: Viz: a Body & a Soul.

2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body; & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.

3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

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2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

It is not easy to define what I think is the very distinctive appeal of this writing. Most apparent is the symmetry of its organization, not only in thought, but in the way it looks to us on the page. But that is not all. Eliot calls "Marriage" Blake's "naked philosophy," as distinguished from "naked observation," or "naked vision." "Naked philosophy" carries, for Eliot here, one suspects, a note of disparagement—disparagement of the work as poetry. But the foreignness of Blake's values to Eliot's, which results in the latter's rather embarrassingly patronizing attitude to Blake's "ideas" (his "strange Gods?"), may have too quickly curtailed his appreciation of the work. It may be philosophy; but its appeal is not that of *mere* philosophy, rather, one that philosophy can share—I will not insist on "poetry"—with art. What I am suggesting here is that one can feel in the passage cited above the force and conviction of a syllogism—yet without the mechanics of ratiocination. As, within what is enclosed by the rules that govern that mode of philosophy, its propositions effect an absolute certainty, so within that world encompassed by Blake's imagination, his propositions carry the assurance, the unarguable force, of something like absolute finality. However, this alone cannot account for its appeal. What speaks to us is the exhilaration of the unimpeded intellect delighting in the power of its own freedom, and cleansing the air of cant. It is the joy consequent on having effected a complete tour de force, an unqualified "transvaluation of values." We have witnessed the *excess* of defiance and exuberance, without the sacrifice of a jot of lucidity.

What America's great epigrammatic genius said of himself he might as rightly have said of Blake—that he found "each sentence an infinitely repellent particle."

> The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.
>
> For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.
>
> This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

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> But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.
>
> If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.
>
> For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

Emerson was speaking of that concision, that power of the mind for distillation, that inclines each thought to stand as an independent presence. For the mind wins for itself each distinct perception by an immense "corrosive" effort; and since each particle of the infinite must itself be infinite, it is manifest as self-contained. Blake does not explain: he merely presents the truth that is evident to the apprehension of the "cleansed" spirit. It is this implication of "nakedness" (to which Eliot calls our attention), a fearlessness that permits no interposition between us and the direct statement of vision, that commands our assent. It is hard to detect in Blake's writing—as one frequently does in that of later prophets like Carlyle, Emerson, Lawrence—that very uncertainty they so despise, and the attempt to dispel it by the willed, resurgent sound of their own voice. If Blake had any doubts about the truth of his own thought, it is not evidenced in the poetry. Nor, I think, do we find in the Olympian laughter of the "Marriage" that self-protective quality of irony so commonplace in much of modern writing. Thus there is something curiously self-protecting and ironic in our unconvincing attempts to "find" Blake in the tradition of Goldsmith, Gray, and Collins; one almost feels it an anxious effort to hide Blake's nakedness, his aloneness—to "award" him the solidarity of a tradition he himself defied, to posthumously save him from the solitude he endured in his own lifetime—as if the burden of witnessing it were too great.

It is in our sense of the Blakean sentence claiming its independence that we can locate what we feel to be not quite right in such a stanza from "Visions" as:

> With what sense is it that the chicken shuns the ravenous hawk?
> With what sense does the tame pigeon measure out the expanse?
> With what sense does the bee form cells? have not the mouse & frog
> Eyes and ears and sense of touch? yet are their habitations
> And their pursuits as different as their forms and as their joys.

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Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens, and the meek camel
Why he loves man: is it because of eye, ear, mouth, or skin,
Or breathing nostrils? No, for these the wolf and tyger have.
Ask the blind worm the secrets of the grave, and why her spires
Love to curl round the bones of death; and ask the rav'nous snake
Where she gets poison, & the wing'd eagle why he loves the sun.

The form of the stanza here is not the right one; for what the form does is to lump together the variety of particular beings, each of which is straining for self-definition; in blurring the outlines, it antagonizes the very idea of individuality that the passage is insisting upon. But I mention this minor flaw only by way of emphasizing the poem's strength, the force of its extraordinary articulated *presence*. To appreciate fully the power of its argument one needs the whole poem before him, to view it in something like the manner in which, I suppose, we would view the total series of plates. The immediate evocative force of the poem's images cannot be considered apart from its intellectual strength; it is because Blake's "argument" is sure that his "poetic images" are sure.

At entrance Theotormon sits, wearing the threshold hard
With secret tears; beneath him sound like waves on a desart shore
The voice of slaves beneath the sun, and children bought with money,
That shiver in religious caves beneath the burning fires
Of lust, that belch incessant from the summits of the earth.

Blake is unerring in his "demonstration" of the confusion of vision, the erroneous morality, which creates the very conditions from which it suffers and which it most abhors. It took a Freud to give a scientific basis to the idea of the connection between political and religious repression, and the lifeless, destructive sexuality of rape, masturbation, and prostitution; "Visions" remains the authoritative poetic statement of this insight.

It is perhaps not impertinent to note that when Eliot imputes to Blake a "confusion of thought, emotion, and vision . . ."[1] he seems to espouse a concept of mind that Blake fiercely repudiated. For Blake, it is only when the integral intelligence is itself confused that such a fragmentation into "thought, emotion, and vision" must occur.

[1] The reference implicates Blake, though made specifically to Nietzsche.

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MICHAEL PAUL NOVAK AND
BELA KIRALYFALVI

# Translations from Attila József

## TO SIT, TO STAND, TO KILL, TO DIE

To give this chair a wicked shove,
to sit in front of a fast train,
cautiously to climb a mountain,
to shake my knapsack down below,
to feed bees to my feeble spider,
to caress someone's old woman,
to sip good tasting bean soup,
there is mud—to walk on tiptoes,
to put my new hat on the tracks,
to skirt the bank of a blue lake,
to squat, clothed, on its bottom,
to sunbathe amid tinkling foam,
to flower with the sunflowers,
or to sigh for something, fine, good,
to simply brush a fly away,
or just wipe off my dusty book,
to spit in my mirror's center,
to embrace my dark enemies,
to kill them all with a long knife,
to study how their blood drips, drips,
or to watch a girl turn, legs, hips,
to make Budapest a bonfire,
to wait for birds to come to crumbs,
to slam my bad bread to the ground,
to force my good lover to cry,
to comfort her little sister,
if I owe accounts to this world,
to leave them, it, unaccounted for—
O binding me, dissolving me,
who now makes me write this poem,
who makes me laugh, who makes me cry,
my life, who makes me choose.

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## GOD

1

When children are playing marbles,
god is loitering around them.
And if a child looks up in awe,
god flips his marble into the hole.

He never thinks about himself
but only about the world.
It's he who makes girls pretty,
their faces rosy with fresh wind.

He watches over polished shoes,
on the street he steps aside politely—
doesn't shove anyone, doesn't quarrel—
when we sleep, he rests quietly.

In my mind perhaps I didn't believe,
but after lugging a heavy sack
I'd toss it down and sit on it,
my arms believed, so did my back.

Now I know him in every way—
I have caught him at his art.
And I know too why he loves me—
I have caught him in my heart.

2

I have since become a young man,
children go to the store in my place;
but if he ever wanted something,
to the store, to the store, I would race.

Whistling when the weather's fine,
without an umbrella in the rain,
I would hurry down the road,
would even go without my coat.

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I'd step briskly, watching for a car,
especially one that doesn't honk,
because, if somehow I were hit,
I'd have gone in vain to the store.

I would study the merchandise,
go where they have the lowest price,
and before I'd show a single dime,
I'd bargain for the longest time.

As I hold it out to him,
his goodness will shine like a star,
his eyes will glow, he will thank me,
only me will he send to the store.

## I'LL BE A GARDENER

I'll be a gardener, growing trees,
and with the sun I'll be rising.
I'll not worry about anything
but grafting my flowers and my trees.

Each and every engrafted plant
will be my darling—we shall not want.
If they be nettle, I don't care—
my flowers will be true, so fair.

I'll drink my milk and smoke a pipe,
guarding my reputation well.
No danger will befall me, no strife
because I will plant myself.

Gardening is what this planet needs—
both east and west should scatter seeds.
Since this world is dropping to its doom,
there should be flowers for its tomb.

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ATTILA JÓZSEF

He was merry, good, and perhaps stubborn
when they crossed him in his beliefs.
He liked to eat and in one or two things
he bore a striking resemblance to god.
From a jewish doctor he got a coat,
while most of his relatives called him:
Hope-Never-To-See-You-Again.
In the orthodox church he found no rest—
only priests. His decay was like his country's.

Well, that's life, don't anyone cry.

ROBERT AND ALDONA PAGE

# Translations from Henrikas Nagys

LATERNA OBSCURA

You and I draw a child's face on the first snow.
Under the wild raspberry bushes sister is rocking her doll.
Workmen spread light snow on the frozen ground during the night
and are now painting the wooden bridge over the Bartuva with tar.
The first snow is soft like sister's hair.

Through the huddled, empty Lowland village
Cossacks dash, slashing with naked swords
the speechless, white winter moonlight.

You and I draw our brother's face on the first snow.
The watchman's epileptic daughter crumbles stale bread
into the open grave. The village woman's waxen face

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and the pleated paper pillow are covered with snowdrifts.
A hoarse dirge and gasping bells grope through the storm.

Through the silent, sleeping Lowland village
Cossacks dash, slashing with long whips
the azure winter moonlight that gleams in the trees.

No one kissed you goodnight. No one wept with you
for your dead mother. No one buried your hanged father.
Your earth was hard and empty like a plowman's palm.
You were not allowed into the kingdom. Your clothes
fluttered like forgotten gray funeral banners.

Through the blighted Lowland village Cossacks dash
carrying the slashed blue winter moonlight
on their long spears.

The earth glistens on this bright Sunday morning
as workmen paint the wooden bridge over the Bartuva with tar.
Deep under the ice the river tarries toward the sea.
Sister's doll sleeps under raspberry branches, covered in drifts.
You and I draw the face of our sleeping brother on the blue snow.

CAPRI

On the island of Capri the cypresses and women are slender and lithe.
On the legendary island of Capri the pitchers and women are slender.
Vineyards wind downhill. The sea and rocks sing.
You came to me on a frosty midnight in December and stood
in my dream, in the square, in the blizzard, in the snowdrifts,
alone and white. Like a blooming tree, a cloud of seagulls,
a Neapolitan column.

Columns of soldiers marched in another dream—a dismal one—
do you remember? from Monte Cassino to Rome. My friend, the poet,

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sang the crumbled sun in the midday dust. You
did not hear his song. The branches of olive and palm
on the emperor's road were hacked off by the steel treads
of apocalyptic tanks.

On the legendary island of Capri children carry the sun in their hands.
The gatherers gather gold in their lemon baskets.
The boats gently and rhythmically sway. Santa Lucia.
Why did you come to my dream? Why to the hostile North?
It is snowing and snowing and snowing and snowing. On the innocent snow
winter is tracing
the white face of a poet.

## PSALM OF FULFILLMENT

The wind lugs the heavy smoke and odor of charred ruins.
The eyes of the evening are dark blue and desolate.
In the city park Monsieur LeMort has arranged the marionettes—
soldiers in the shade of plane trees—and acts out the game:
funeral of the puppets.

My brothers and sisters went a long journey,
bearing but a crust of bread and the birds of dreams,
to where the nut tree is hard and light,
where cradles rock and orioles whistle,
their bright heads against the green velvet of grass.

I alone am left. The wind's melody endlessly
echoes and echoes and echoes from deep dusk, from nowhere.
The iron glove of dread grips my chest
and carries me paralyzed to a nameless roaring river
without towns or trees, deserted by people and sky.

The sun is gone, only shadows remain.
Words are gone, lips and tongues remain.

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The wind's dismal lament reverberates through the night, from nowhere.
All of us—damned angels on the edge of the murky sky
searching over the empty earth for our white shadows.

The echo of deafened bronze remains in the twilight.
The eyes of evening are desolate and painfully blue.
The wind lugs the heavy odor of charred ruins and rotting earth.
In the sand of the clearing children with little spades
are burying a small yellow bird and the large summer.

### OAKS

They are coming, a great, somber throng.
They slowly sway their heavy crowns,
and like distant thunder, like drums,
their song reverberates weirdly:

—we carry the sky
—we bear the bloody sky
—we carry the dead sky
—we bring the night

Their huge dark hands,
their clutching fingers twisted with wounds,
hold a rigid cloud:
like a great black coffin.

They are coming. They carry the sunset:
slowly swaying, a great, somber throng.

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ADOLPH HOFMANN

# The Horseshoe Finder

*Translated from Osip Mandelstam*

We look at the forest and say:
There, a forest of ships, of masts,
rose-colored conifers,
free of every weight of moss up to the tops,
they should creak in the storm,
in furious, unforested air,
as lonesome pines;
under the salty heel of the wind, the plumbline stays fast,
fixed on the dancing deck,
and the seafarer,
unbridled in his thirst for distance and space,
drags the fragile apparatus of the geometer across the water-furrows,
relates the rough surfaces of oceans
with the gravity of the bosom of the earth.

We breathe the scent
of resin tears that seep from ship-walls,
feast our eyes
on boards and planks, riveted, well-fitted
into the bulkheads
—it was not the peaceful carpenter of Bethlehem who made this,
but another, the father
of journeyers, the seafarer's friend—
and say:
They too once stood on the earth,
uncomfortable as a burro's back,
their tops out of touch with the roots,
on the famous mountain ridge,
they roared in the sweet-water downpour
and proffered—in vain—their noble burden to heaven
for a pinch of salt.

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Where to begin?
Everything cracks and sways.
The air trembles with similes.
No word is better than another,
the earth drones with metaphors,
and the light two-wheeled carriages
with the glittering teams of thick-packed bird-swarms,
burst into pieces
in the contest with the favorites of the race course.
Thrice hallowed he who puts a name into a song!
The name-graced song
lives longer amongst the others—
It is made cognizable amidst its companions by a headband
that wards off unconsciousness, and too strong, numbing odors:
of a man's nearness,
the smell of the fur of a strong animal,
or simply the scent of thyme rubbed between one's palms.

The air is dark, like water, and all living things swim therein,
like fish,
opening a path with their fins through a sphere
that is firm, resilient, slightly heated—
a crystal in which wheels move and horses shy,
the damp black earth of Neaira newly broken up each night
with pitchfork, trident, hoe and plow.
The air is just as densely mixed as the earth—
one cannot leave the air, to step into it is hard.

A rustling goes through the woods, like a wicket, green.
Children dice with spine-bones of dead animals.
Our era's fragile time-account is drawing to an end.
Thanks for that which was:
I myself have gone astray, become confused, have miscalculated.
The era clanged like a golden sphere,
hollow and of one cast, born by no one,
at every touch it answered, "yes," and "no."
As a child answers,
"I will give you the apple," or, "I will not give you the apple."
And his face is the exact impression of the voice that says these
words.

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The sound lives on, though its cause has disappeared.
A horse lies in the dust, in a lather, snorting,
but the sharp arch of his neck
still preserves the memory of the race with legs thrown far apart,
when there were not four legs,
but as many as stones that lay on the path,
interchanged four times—
as often as the fire-snorting pacer bounded from the ground.

And he,
who found the horseshoe,
blows it clean of dust,
rubs it shiny with wool,
and then
hangs it over the threshold;
there it shall rest,
and no longer have to strike sparks from the pebble-strewn paths.

The human lips
that have nothing more to say,
preserve the form of the last word they said,
and the hand still feels the full weight of the jug,
the half of which
it spilt
in carrying home.
What I now say, is not said by me,
but rather, is dug up out of the earth, like petrified grains of wheat.

One people
portray a lion on their coins,
others,
a head;
all sorts of copper, golden, bronze disks
rest in the earth, the one kind as honorable as the other.
The age that tried to gnaw them through has left its teethmarks on them.
Time saws on me as on a coin,
and I—I do not even suffice for myself.

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B. H. HAGGIN

# The Imagined World of Virgil Thomson

A CLIPPING I HAVE HELD ONTO all these years has the replies of the two American composers whom Olin Downes, early in 1934, asked for "their opinions apropos of last Sunday's leading article on this page, on the becoming attitude of the American critic toward the native composer and his works." Roger Sessions wrote about the relation of the critic to the composer; Virgil Thomson wrote about the proper way to set declamation in opera. And a few years ago there was occasion for me to speak of this and to comment that it enabled me "to understand those articles and reviews that have no connection with the concert or book they are supposedly concerned with. Thomson writes about what is in his mind at the moment; and it's up to the pianist or author to adjust himself to that—not the other way around." I mention this because it now turns out, in his memoirs,[1] to be true not only of his writing about music but of his writing about everything: he lives in, deals with, and writes about a world imagined as he would like it to be.

Not entirely, of course: the fascinating letters Thomson quotes—the ones from Gertrude Stein about their collaborations, the one from John Houseman about Orson Welles—actually were written by Stein and Houseman; the things Thomson says happened in the creation and production of *Four Saints in Three Acts* did happen. Moreover, in a matter like *Four Saints* Thomson *could* make reality conform to the idea of it in his mind. In 1926 he decided that Gertrude Stein was the one to write an opera libretto for him:

> My theory was that if a text is set correctly for the sound of it, the meaning will take care of itself. And the Stein texts, for prosodizing in this way, were manna. . . . You could make a setting for sound and syntax only, then add, if needed, an accompaniment equally functional. I had no sooner put to music after this recipe one short Stein text than I knew I had opened a door. I had never had any doubts about Stein's poetry; from then on I had none about my ability to handle it in music.

In the winter of 1928-29, in New York, at a party where he played and sang the completed *Four Saints,* he met a Miss Ettie Stettheimer, who invited him to meet her sisters, one of them a painter; and "as

[1] VIRGIL THOMSON, by *Virgil Thomson.* Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95.

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soon as I had seen Florine's pictures . . . I knew we shared a view about the stage. So I besought her, should there be an American production of *Four Saints,* to consider designing its costumes and scenery." In 1932-33, during a visit to a small joint in Harlem "where Jimmy Daniels was just starting out as host and entertainer . . . I turned to Russell, realizing the impeccable enunciation of Jimmy's speech-in-song, and said, 'I think I'll have my opera sung by Negroes.'" Also, "I had early invited Alexander Smallens to conduct the work," and "I had looked around too for a stage director; but none of the old and famous ones was interested, and the young ones seemed to have no prescience about opera. . . . When I went back to Paris in April, I knew my décors and my music were in good hands; but I still had no idea what director or choreographer would add movement." However, in London that summer he met young Frederick Ashton, who was beginning to do choreography for the Sadler's Wells company, and for whom he played and sang *Four Saints.* "'Could you imagine staging my opera?' I asked. 'O yes, and with delight,' was the reply." And back in New York in the fall of 1933, he met John Houseman, for whom he played the opera, and whom he told about his wish for a Negro cast and about Miss Stettheimer. "Did he think the work would interest him to stage? 'It would be fun to try,' he answered." All as un-Lincoln-Center-like as it could be; and it achieved not only the delightful work itself but the production that was one of the great events in American theater history.

On the other hand, somewhere around 1926 Thomson made "the very simple discovery that the classic masters, in terms of logic and syntax, did not always quite make sense," which "meant that I could . . . cultivate the discipline of spontaneity" in what developed into "the long-line nonrepeating continuity of the Violin Sonata and the First String Quartet." In these and other works of that period he felt, in 1932, he "had either broken new ground or brought something to term." Here Thomson could have his private idea of the music of the classic masters and of his own music, but he could not change the realities of the music as they were apprehended by others. For their ears the classic masters continued to make excellent sense in terms of logic and syntax; which is to say that what, in classical sonata form, Thomson later described as "the static rhetorical returns and recapitulations" that "depersonalize the expression," and the "structural continuity devices" that distract listeners' attention "from whatever direct and personal communication the music may have to offer them," were for others part of an ordered use of the medium for the purpose of "direct and personal communication." And to my ears—as I wrote once after a performance of the Violin Sonata—the "long-line nonrepeating continuity" that Thomson substituted for those devices sounded like a free association which produced a flow of undifferentiated, unshaped material without coherence. (I am,

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like Thomson, speaking here only of his internally organized instrumental works, not of his music organized by words.)

So with Thomson's writing about music. In his account of what he achieved *in* the writing, and *with* it, Thomson, like God, sees "everything that he . . . made, and behold, it was very good." And he can have this private idea, but he cannot change the known or ascertainable realities for others. Thus, in his mind his first book, *The State of Music* (1939), and the first collection of his *Herald Tribune* reviews and articles, *The Musical Scene* (1945), received "rave reviews." Having no recollection of any such enthusiasm for *The State of Music,* I looked up the review in *The Times Book Review,* which turned out to be a characteristic leaden performance by Howard Taubman: "Mr. Thomson has broken down the sources of a composer's income into a careful set of categories. . . . Mr. Thomson attempts to discover how each of these income-sources affects a composer and his music. He hits the mark often. Occasionally he is betrayed into some large generalization. . . ." But the review of *The Musical Scene* I didn't have to look up; I had described it in *The Nation:* "Reviews of books sometimes provide performances that are interesting or amusing to watch. Thus, Virgil Thomson's *The Musical Scene* being condescended to, in *The Times,* by Mark Schubart, and Mr. Schubart reminding the reader to take the book's contents as only the opinions of Mr. Thomson—that is something to hug one's sides over." As for my own *Nation* reviews, I recommended *The State of Music* "to a reader who has, to start with, a grasp of the facts about the musical world that will enable him to know when Thomson's acute, ironic, witty, eccentric mind offers a keenly and amusingly perceptive comment on the facts, and when, on the other hand, the writing is to be taken as a mere exercise of an acute, ironic, witty, eccentric mind, and as such enjoyable or fantastic or unintelligible." And concerning the *Herald Tribune* writing in *The Musical Scene* I wrote: "There are . . . in this volume constructions of thought . . . which deal with . . . things as they exist in a private world of Thomson's, and which are so remote from the realities of our world as to be worthless, and in some instances not to make coherent, understandable sense even in their own terms. . . . But there are also . . . occasions when his sharp ears and mind are applied to what is actually happening . . . and the results are superb pieces of criticism." I might say that I made the same comment about the collections of further *Herald Tribune* writing, *The Art of Judging Music* (1948) and *Music Right and Left* (1951); and I repeat it about the pieces reprinted from the earlier volumes, and the additional ones from Thomson's last years on the *Herald Tribune,* in the recently published paperback, *Music Reviewed.*[2] Thomson evidently sees that

[2] MUSIC REVIEWED 1940-54, by *Virgil Thomson.* Vintage. $1.95.

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they are all very good; but an outsider distinguishes the accurate descriptions of the singing of Flagstad and Tourel that he approved of, the playing of Heifetz and Horowitz that he disapproved of, from the writing like *The Toscanini Case,* whose inventions and schematizations have today no more connection with what the listener experienced as the realities of Toscanini's work than when Thomson first published them. And what I add this time is that the outsider is astonished to find these inventions and schematizations repeated as though the facts that contradicted them had never been pointed out, and is similarly astonished by the repetition of other such pieces of idea-spinning whose contradiction by fact was pointed out. It appears that Thomson—whose method of demonstration is mere pronouncement—deals with disproof by mere repetition of the pronouncement (though on one occasion it caused him to lose his temper in print in a manner anyone else would recall with embarrassment).

The "rave reviews" of *The State of Music* and *The Musical Scene* are only the first of the many items requiring correction in Thomson's account of his operation as a music critic. It wasn't all as good as he sees it; and the reason appears—without his realizing it—in his reply to Mrs. Ogden Reid, owner of *The Herald Tribune,* when she asked him what he thought of the idea of becoming its music critic: "I replied that the general standard of music reviewing in New York had sunk so far that almost any change might bring improvement. Also I thought perhaps my presence in a post so prominent might stimulate performance of my works." As it turned out, he did bring improvement to the reviewing of music: when he was content to do the reviewer's job of describing and evaluating what was placed before him he produced the only newspaper reports worth reading. But his second statement to Mrs. Reid reveals that he saw the *Herald Tribune* post as an opportunity to achieve other ends besides improved reviewing; and when his eye was on those ends, rather than on the object before him, he often produced what was not worth the paper's space and his readers' time and attention.

Thomson sees his *Herald Tribune* operation as that of a "species of knight-errant attacking dragons single-handedly and rescuing musical virtue in distress." More specifically, he felt

> engaged . . . to expose the philanthropic persons in control of our musical institutions for the amateurs they are, to reveal the manipulators of our musical distribution for the culturally retarded profit makers that indeed they are, and to support with all the power of my praise every artist, composer, group, or impresario whose relation to music was straightforward, by which I mean based only on music and the sound it makes. The businessmen and the amateurs . . . became enemies right off.

As I recall the operation, and see it in the pieces collected in the

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books, it was in addition that of someone himself a public performer, at all times conscious of his audience and concerned with the effect—and on occasion the shock effect—of his performance on that audience. Or rather, not in addition but primarily: his own performance, and his impressiveness in that performance, took precedence over all other objectives, sometimes without damage to the proper objective of reviewing, sometimes with such damage.

The performances Thomson set out to impress his audience with included the pieces of fancy idea-spinning about things made up in his head, some of which he evidently still admires, since he has reprinted them again in *Music Reviewed.* A typical example was *The Personality of Three Orchestras,* in which he contended that the differences between the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia and New York Philharmonic Orchestras reflected only slightly the differences between their conductors, and mostly the differences between "the cities that created them and forged them slowly into the image of each city's intellectual ideals," and specifically that the orchestra of "Boston, the intellectually elegant and urbane . . . makes thin sounds, like the Paris orchestras, thin and utterly precise, like golden wire and bright enamel"—concerning which it was pointed out that these thin sounds like golden wire were what was produced by the Boston Symphony of 1943 conducted by Koussevitzky, but not what was produced by the Boston Symphony conducted by Karl Muck that I heard in 1917, or even by the post-1920 Boston Symphony created and conducted by Monteux. And shock effect was achieved in addition by *The Toscanini Case,* with its several pages of inventions and schematizations that would need an entire issue of this magazine to deal with—exemplified by this explanation of the "streamlining" to achieve "purely auditory excitement" that was Thomson's description of the Toscanini style which, for other listeners, imparted expressiveness to plastically coherent shape:

> When [like Toscanini] one memorizes everything, one acquires a great awareness of music's run-through. One runs it through in the mind constantly; and one finds in that way a streamlined rendering that is wholly independent of detail and even of specific significance, a disembodied version that is all shape and no texture. Later, in rehearsal, one returns to the texture; and one takes care that it serve always as neutral surfacing for the shape. For shape is what any piece is always about that one has memorized through the eye and the inner ear. Playing a piece for shape and run-through gives . . . the most exciting effect that can ever be produced.

Concerning this it was pointed out that actually Toscanini away from the podium did not keep running through pieces of music in his mind, but kept reading them in the score, and in this constant study of the printed score was concerned always with texture—with this

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bassoon part or that viola part buried in the tutti that must be made clearly audible in the performance. And back on the podium after such study, he would, says Josef Gingold in *The Toscanini Musicians Knew,* "take just, let's say, the second clarinet and third horn and violas—inner voices—and make them play alone. . . . He made these voices sing as if they were thematic, and then incorporated them with the rest of the orchestral texture. And how beautiful the whole thing became!" Thomson found it extraordinary "how little musicians discuss among themselves Toscanini's rightness or wrongness about matters of speed and rhythm and the tonal amenities"; but Toscanini's rightness in these matters was one of the things I heard NBC Symphony musicians discuss at rehearsals at the time Thomson first made the statement, and one of the things they talk about in *The Toscanini Musicians Knew.* "Toscanini's influence lies, so far, chiefly in America," said Thomson. "Europe follows Furtwängler and Beecham and great French conductors like Monteux and Münch. It has no need of exchanging their interpretations or their working methods for anything so oversimplified as Toscanini's." But Hugo Burghauser of the Vienna Philharmonic says of its work with Toscanini: "The orchestra, which had been day in, day out with Strauss, Weingartner, Bruno Walter, by then also Klemperer, with . . . the greatest talent of the world . . .—the orchestra, with Toscanini, realized that this was the climax of every musician's experience." As for "the marriage of historical and literary with musical culture" transmitted from Wagner through "von Bülow, Nikisch, and Beecham," and lacking in Toscanini's performances, Thomson hadn't heard Wagner's or von Bülow's or Nikisch's performances, and therefore had no real knowledge about them; he *had* heard Beecham's performances, but so had I; and what I had heard in them was a pacing and shaping of the music, not a marriage of historical and literary with musical culture, which I doubt was to be heard in Wagner's or von Bülow's or Nikisch's performances either. For me, therefore, Thomson's statement was an example of his occasional use of impressive-sounding but meaningless language for the same purpose as Father Divine's.

An example of a good objective vitiated for shock effect was the extension of range in what to review, which led to Thomson's reviewing a number of events that deserved his and his readers' attention—among them Klemperer's concert with a W.P.A. orchestra, an opera at the Juilliard School, the High School of Music and Art, a Bach oratorio in a church, Disney's *Fantasia,* a Broadway musical of Kurt Weill, a swing concert at the Museum of Modern Art. But he was willing to review anything out-of-the-way if he "[got] a lively piece out of it"; and his choice of occasions to review that he was aware were "by the conventions of the time wildly capricious" resulted in reports to New York music-lovers on things like "a Negro preacher in New

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Jersey who wore frilled white-paper wings over his blue suit and played swing music on an electric guitar . . . a W.P.A. orchestra in Newark, three other suburban and regional orchestras, a *Southern Harmony* sing in Benton, Kentucky, the Boston 'Pops' in Boston, and the Goldman Band in Central Park." Moreover, some instances of excessively extended range turned out to be related to what he had, in his reply to Mrs. Reid, foreseen as the way the *Herald Tribune* post might further his career as a composer. He doesn't quote any reply by her; he writes that his editors "found nothing suspect" when conductors who previously had left his music unperformed now suddenly began to perform it; and he thinks, incorrectly, that he adequately disposes of the question of propriety when he says the conductors "knew that if they played it in New York, I obviously could not review that concert" (they knew also that he would be reviewing their other concerts). What he says nothing about is the occasional Sunday article that began with an evaluation of the chorus of a little college in some remote place, of no interest to anyone in New York, which was not explained until the statement one learned to expect in a later paragraph: "In a performance of this writer's cantata . . ." Here the college music department that put on the performance of Thomson's piece did get an article by him about the chorus; and these articles were a shameless abuse of *The Herald Tribune* and its readers, which Thomson will never get me to believe the paper's owner and editors didn't dislike, though they put up with it.

The concern for his own effective performance won out, on occasion, over his "support . . . [of] every artist" against the "culturally retarded profit makers" who were "the manipulators of our musical distribution"—by whom he meant the two large concert managements whose at that time almost total monopoly of concert-giving in this country made it extremely difficult for an artist not on their lists to get engagements. Thomson warred chiefly with the Columbia Concerts Corporation headed by Arthur Judson, which, among other things, compelled its artists to perform only a limited number of familiar and popular pieces throughout the country. And one of the artists Judson had dropped was the distinguished pianist Webster Aitken, who had insisted on playing the greater works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert and modern works by Copland and Carter. Today this is standard recital repertory; and today independent managers can secure numerous engagements for a distinguished pianist who plays it. But not in the forties; and Aitken had an additional formidable obstacle: then as now a performer's engagements outside of New York depended on the reviews of his New York appearances, and most of all on the review in *The Times;* and in the ten years since his debut Aitken's every appearance had been covered by the same *Times* reviewer, Noel Straus, who had attacked his playing in his

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review each time. Indeed, at a recital in 1945 at which Aitken played a superb program to a warmly appreciative audience, Straus couldn't wait to write his disapproval, but proclaimed it during the concert loudly enough for people in the vicinity to hear. This recital was covered by Thomson; and as someone professedly anti-management and pro-artist, aware of the hard time an artist had who was not on a big-management list, and of the importance for such an artist of his New York reviews in obtaining engagements outside of New York, Thomson could be expected to say nothing less than what he thought about Aitken's recital, but to choose his words with care, in order to give him as much support as he could, and avoid doing him harm. That is, after a first paragraph in which he elaborated on his opening statement, "Webster Aitken is a master pianist and a master musician," Thomson could have reported that after "a Bach toccata and a Mozart rondo . . . executed with admirable clarity and with an amazingly straightforward loveliness," Aitken had performed Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations,* which Thomson realized was a highly regarded monument of the piano literature that evidently had interested the large audience in Town Hall, but which he found "laborious, cumbersome, and long," though it "was far from boresome as read by Mr. Aitken." What Thomson did instead was to title his review *Young Man, Why So Serious?,* and to develop this idea in the review, writing that he had been bothered by "what seemed to him an excessive seriousness about . . . both program and playing"; that after the Bach and Mozart pieces, instead of "something lighter to follow up these substantial matters"—as though these two small pieces so taxed the listener's mind that nothing more could be asked of it—Aitken had played the *Diabelli Variations,* which "was far from boresome as read by Mr. Aiken . . . but was tiring nevertheless," and "brought out all the rather heavy seriousness of this pianist's temperament." The impression of program and playing that Thomson gave was one to scare off any concert manager outside of New York; and the performance which achieved Thomson's objective of being interesting and amusing to his readers, had the effect of an additional torpedo into the Aitken career.

On the other hand, Thomson could on occasion refrain from exposing the amateurishness of a philanthropic sponsor of a concert series. It was astonishing once to read a Sunday article on The New Friends of Music in which Thomson quoted its statement of aims and commented: "One cannot deny that the aims . . . are excellent and that the New Friends have pursued them assiduously." For it was impossible to believe he didn't perceive the triviality of some of the aims and the failure to live up to others that were important. At the very least, with his attachment to French music, one would have expected him to point out that the professed aim of offering "complete cycles of composers' works" and "as complete a representation

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of the literature of the individual composers" had not been lived up to in the "comprehensive survey" of French chamber music "from Rameau to Ravel" that had offered instead a mere work or two by each composer. Thomson's unusual forbearance was impossible to understand. But it is explained at last: in his memoirs he relates how—when Columbia Concerts Corporation threatened to withdraw its advertising from *The Herald Tribune* until he was fired—the head of The New Friends, who was the advertising manager of a department store, informed the *Herald Tribune* advertising manager that he would match the withdrawn advertising line for line.

Thomson's image of the *Herald Tribune* music department he joined and what he made of it also requires correction. The assistant reviewers he found there when he began were Francis D. Perkins, who was also executive editor of the department, Jerome D. Bohm, who also wrote the record column, and Robert Lawrence. With them he "ran a suprisingly efficient department"; and when the war removed two of them temporarily, he brought in the composers Paul Bowles and Arthur Berger; when it removed the paper's dance critic, he brought in Edwin Denby; and later he got me to write a guest column on radio music, and Rudi Blesh to write one on jazz. In addition he had a number of outside writers whom he used when they were needed for complete coverage; "and this pool of 'stringers' constituted a training corps that comprised my future music editor, Jay Harrison, and the present *New York Times* staff writers Theodore Strongin and Allen Hughes." As Thomson tells it, he gives the impression of seeing it all as justifying his satisfaction and pride; but actually most of it justified the opposite. For some of it he wasn't responsible: he could do nothing about the assistants he found in the department, who produced some of the reviewing whose low standard he had spoken of to Mrs. Reid. Actually he did make one partial attempt which failed: when he asked me to write the radio music column he went on to ask whether I would be willing also to write the record column; and when, taken aback, I said, "But what about Bohm?," he barked, "That's my affair. And besides Bohm doesn't care about it." But evidently he discovered that Bohm did care about it; for I heard nothing more about it from Thomson. Some years later, with Bohm gone, but with *The Herald Tribune* unwilling to pay anyone to write the record column, Thomson had to let it be filled with the rubbish that a member of the editorial department, Herbert Kupferberg, was willing to write for nothing. But the appointment of Jay Harrison to the staff was Thomson's, made with full knowledge of the phrase-slinging that was the Harrison contribution to New York music reviewing—e.g. this about Menotti's *Amahl:* "Once again Mr. Menotti has demonstrated that the lyric stage is his destiny. It is a destiny which becomes him as golden robes do a prince." Nor is the Strongin contribution anything for Thomson to pat himself on the back for.

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Being a composer didn't make Berger a good reviewer; and Blesh's pretentious schematizations about jazz were something *The Herald Tribune* and its readers would have been better off without. That leaves Denby as someone Thomson is entitled to feel proud of having brought to the paper; and Bowles—of whom my recollection is dim—may be another.

This must be added about Bohm. Not only did he lack accurate critical perception and write badly, but he wrote with his personal unpleasantness and he was unscrupulous: even bad singers could get good reviews from him by coaching with him and having their recital gowns designed by his apartment-mate. And in the spring of 1946 there occurred the sensational incident in which Bohm—covering the first recital of a completely unknown pianist, Maryla Jonas, which was attended by a handful of the public and a few second-string reviewers expecting to be bored—reported having instead been electrified by the playing of the "finest woman pianist since Teresa Carreño." The result was a packed Carnegie Hall for Jonas's second recital, concerning which Olin Downes wrote that he had heard "a poet and master of her instrument," but I reported having found the total sum of Jonas's interpretive resources to be an exaggeratedly dramatic alternation between the utmost extremes of soft and loud produced with ludicrously exaggerated visual theatricalisms. This led Thomson to attend her next recital and to write that Jonas "is everything the reviewers said of her last spring. . . . Straightforwardness . . . is the quality of her work that . . . puts it among that of the great. . . . When the musical texture is . . . complex . . . she organizes her melody, her accompanying figures, her bass, her countermelody, and her interjected melodic comments at different levels of loudness, using also different kinds of tone, orchestrating the piece, so to speak, for clarity." And more of same. As it happened, within a couple of years the public had learned better. And the true reason for Bohm's having been electrified by Jonas's first recital became known: on her manager's advice she had had her recital gown designed by Bohm's apartment-mate.

Thomson mentions as an additional achievement that he "organized a Music Critics' Circle (still in existence)." But one wonders what could have caused someone aware of how far the standard of music reviewing had sunk to organize the critics responsible for that low standard in such a group and to associate himself with them in its public acts (I declined his invitation to join it). And the reason seems to me to have been his strong impulse to be a mover and shaker, for which his *Herald Tribune* post now provided increased leverage. The last part of his book is largely an account of his further moving and shaking, which continues to need correction of his image of what it achieved.

Thus, in 1943 he and a French refugee musician put on a series of

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concerts at the Museum of Modern Art, "all involving rare music, much of it presented by artists so remarkable and so new . . . that our evenings offered a refreshing and particular splendor"—one of the works being Paul Bowles's setting of part of a Lorca play, which Thomson calls "quite beautiful." But concerning the promised "rare music ancient and modern" I wrote in *The Nation* that the rare ancient music turned out to be Mozart's best-known G-minor Quintet and familiar Symphony K.183, Bach's well-known Concerto in D minor, "with the solo part played on the harpsichord by Ralph Kirkpatrick with an ostentatious lack of feeling for either the music or the instrument," and a Little Suite by Handel-Beecham, "too big and with too much Beecham in the arrangement"; and that the rare modern music included "a new Piano Quintet by Martinu, which provided another example of this composer's ability to spin out nothing much to nothing much more," Revueltas' *Homage to Garcia Lorca,* which I found "atrocious," and Bowles's *The Wind Remains,* "described as a 'zarzuela in one act, after García Lorca,' which, as it was staged with painfully amateurish actors, carried incoherence to the point of sheer lunacy."

And when Flagstad, planning to return to this country in 1947, was threatened with picketing,

> looking into the matter to decide my attitude, I learned from the Norwegian Embassy that although this artist had been no patriot, neither was there any juridical hindrance to her traveling in freedom and practicing her profession. I even received from the chief justice of the Norwegian Supreme Court a letter stating this. So I covered in Boston her first concert, incorporating this information in my review. There were minor demonstrations there and a few at her first New York recital. But by the next year she was singing again at the Metropolitan . . .

Actually the demonstrations in New York and elsewhere, which were major—in Philadelphia a disturbance and a stink bomb inside the Academy of Music—continued for almost two years; and it was not until three years later, after Edward Johnson's departure from the Metropolitan, that Flagstad sang there again at Rudolf Bing's invitation.

The self-deluding self-importance attains, in this last section, a fatuous extreme, leaving one, at the end, with continuing respect for the man who produced *Four Saints* and other stage works, and for the man who wrote some of the criticism in *Music Reviewed,* but with no respect for the man who wrote *Virgil Thomson.*

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WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

# Beethoven's Revolution

BEFORE BEETHOVEN LEFT BONN FOR VIENNA, his first patron Count Waldstein wrote in his album: "The Genius of Mozart is mourning and weeping over the death of her pupil. She found a refuge but no occupation with the inexhaustible Haydn; through him she wishes to form a union with another. With the help of assiduous labor you shall receive *Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands.*" Joseph Kerman begins *The Beethoven Quartets*[1] by quoting these prophetic words, which quickly lead him into general speculations about history:

> We find ourselves drawn to the historical prophecy because history is our instinct, perhaps—because a sense of history is what we have left. Not having been there, with Waldstein, we can only establish contact by imposing upon people, art, and events a retrospective order that is quite another thing than the rich disorder of involvement. History for us has whitened actuality into abstraction. The immediacy of artistic struggle becomes a set of trends, points of contact, and lines of development relating works of art which grow more and more isolated; isolation may make them appear more impressive, yet the impressiveness is lonely, and the price inexorably in flesh and blood. It can be repaid only by an effort of historical imagination, and then only in small part. We can hardly recapture the living quality of that time and place, the chaos that Waldstein knew.

The reader's first response to this verbiage is amused bewilderment: *chaos!?*—after all, Waldstein had picked a winner and so things can't have looked all that chaotic to him. But as one blinks and rereads, bewilderment gives way to irritation. The rather Eliotish prissiness of "quite another thing" suggests that a hitherto unnoticed distinction of the highest importance is being drawn with surgical precision; yet all the passage really says is that a man writing about events that took place almost two hundred years ago can neither experience them directly, here and now, nor remember them (the human life-span being what it is), but must rely instead on historical imagination, which can never give him the same experience of those events he would have had if he'd actually been there when they took place. To make this truism seem profound Kerman lards his dramatically cadenced prose ("—because a sense of history is what we have left") with words like "lonely" and "isolated" and "involvement," which don't much help the sense but do give the whole business the ring of crisis-theology. And the logic that gets him from "actuality" to "disorder" to "chaos" is really little better than free association: if the historian's experience of the past is

[1] THE BEETHOVEN QUARTETS, by *Joseph Kerman*. Alfred A. Knopf. $10.00.

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necessarily *different from* the actuality, and if what the historian seeks is order, then the actuality must have been *the opposite of* order, i.e. disorder or even chaos.

To write in this way is to use words to discourage thought rather than to articulate it, and to divert the reader's attention from one's subject-matter to oneself. There is a great deal more such writing in this book—far more than any reader who admired Kerman's *Opera as Drama* (1956) as much as I did could have predicted. In the chapters that follow we are treated to equally pompous and useless lectures on such large general matters as "the crux of observation and intuition" in aesthetic experience; the "inchoate dialectic between [artistic] ends and means, between technique and expression"; the "dialectic of appreciation" that "may be said to exist" between "the *œuvre* and the single work"; the similarities between "the integrity of a work of art" and "the integrity of a person," and the consequent value of talking about "the personalities of individual works of art"; and the need to avoid "the cultivation of methodologies," which "resemble ideologies in their tendency to lead charmed lives of their own absurdly abstracted from the real world."

It's not that these lectures have no point, for in fact they seem to have two perfectly legitimate (if not exactly novel) ones. First: "There has to be a standard of relevance, and a priori standards are open to the gravest difficulties, both theoretical and practical. The right standard is aesthetic, and the critic's role is constantly to return to feeling as a touchstone for analytical relevance." Second: "what matters is the separateness, the integrity of individual works of art." The trouble is rather that such general pronouncements never tell us much in themselves; everything depends on what is made of them in practice.

And when we turn to Kerman's practice we find that it doesn't always match what he preaches. Despite his talk about relevance, he is very fond of producing coincidences or random correspondences and then just letting them sit there on the page, without demonstrating their relevance or even asking if they have any. For example, the fact that two pieces or movements are in the same key may have critical relevance, but that relevance always needs demonstrating—the fact itself is never enough. Yet Kerman constantly brings forth such facts with breathless excitement, as though he had obviously discovered something important. To give only one of more than a dozen instances I counted before I got tired: after pointing out that Op. 74 "employs as many as three different keys for its four movements," he adds that "previously Beethoven had used three keys in only one sonata-like work—the recently composed Piano Trio in E♭, Op. 70, No. 2, using exactly the same three!"

Moreover, Kerman often tries to use such irrelevant correspondences to make a historical point. For example, there are three curious references to Webern. The first occurs in Kerman's analysis of the slow

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introduction (*La Malinconia*) to the finale of Op. 18 No. 6. In bars 12-16 the successive notes of the melody, which form the rising scale F♯-G-A-B-C, are allotted alternately to high and low octaves and to the first and second violins. Kerman refers to "the dissociation in register" that produces "a series of melodic 7ths and 9ths rather than plain upward steps" as "a Webernish conception, and by no means the last to be met with in the Beethoven quartets." Now of course there are frequent jumps of a 7th or a 9th in Webern, but since Beethoven's passage in no way *sounds* like Webern—both because of its harmony and because it is performing a function unimaginable in a Webern work—what sense does it make to call these jumps Webernish? Tchaikovsky splits the melody between the first and second violins at the beginning of the finale of the *Pathétique,* and so Kerman could with equal justice (which is to say none) have referred to that as "a Tchaikovskian conception." So it is with the other two passages (in Op. 59 No. 1) that suggest Webern to Kerman: as with the *La Malinconia* passage and most of the examples of key similarity, the correspondence he is pointing out is irrelevant because it lies entirely in the way things look to the eye out of context rather than in the way they sound to the ear in context. "It is of the utmost importance" in musical analysis, Tovey once wrote, "that [the student] should never set down anything that his ear has not recognized apart from the appearance on the printed page. The ear will never learn to recognize subtleties if the power of judgment has been debilitated by *a priori* fancies."

Thus Kerman's failures to exercise a sense of relevance often result in failures to employ his historical imagination properly. And such failures of historical imagination are not isolated or peripheral but central to the book and its argument. For it turns out that Kerman has a "methodology" of his own after all (or at least an axe to grind), and his principal way of trying to make the evidence support it is consistently to call attention to what the eye sees on the page, regardless of what the ear may or may not hear in performance. "The interrelationship and the quality of the sequence among the movements of the classic cyclic work," he announces early in the book, "was the subject of one of Beethoven's most far-reaching reinterpretations of the Haydnesque or Mozartian conception." Fair enough: we think of the late quartets and sonatas, and agree. And we also agree when Kerman adds that Beethoven's "earliest music . . . is not the place to study this tendency." But suddenly we find him repeatedly doing just that—or rather doing it even as he denies he's doing it, giving with one hand and taking away with the other. Of Op. 18 No. 2 he writes: "Maybe Beethoven already had an inchoate idea of some new ascendancy over the classic style, in 1799; that possibility makes a study of the G-major Quartet fascinating. Certainly he was still too close to that style to plumb it and turn it as he could in 1826." But then a moment later, bringing forward a correspondence of themes that counts for abso-

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lutely nothing in performance, he writes: "Not until the Quartet in C ♯ minor of 1826 [Op. 131] will Beethoven draw so lucid an analogy between a finale theme and a theme from the opening movement."

Moreover, Kerman's need to see in Op. 18 anticipations of Op. 131 —which, it soon becomes clear, he has picked as the work that best exemplifies Beethoven's "reinterpretation" of sonata style—also leads him to assert that the last three Op. 18 quartets are radically different from the first three. For him the last three "reveal in many ways a decisive break in Beethoven's mood, in his attitude toward the problem of quartet composition," "a definite struggle to achieve a more viable balance among the various movements of the cyclic work" that results in a further clarification of "his dissatisfaction with the *status quo*." "Disruptive forces of all kinds are at work in these quartets," in which "Beethoven seems suddenly to have thrown the classical framework in doubt. . . . He may have realized for the first time that he did not have to be bound by convention; or more likely he knew . . . that he simply could no longer hold to convention."

But one *hears* no startling difference between Nos. 1-3 and Nos. 4-6, any more than one hears the "analogy" between the first and last movements of No. 2. And aside from irrelevant thematic correspondences and titillating conjectures, Kerman's main bit of evidence for this curious view, "the most dramatic sign of [Beethoven's] uncertainty and sense of disruption," is the fact—which he tells us is "well known" but which "seems never to have astonished commentators sufficiently"—that No. 5 was consciously modeled on Mozart's K. 464. Yet of course the reason that no one has ever been astonished that Beethoven should have used in this way a work that (as Kerman himself points out) was one of his favorites is simply that it is a perfectly unastonishing fact from which nothing whatever can be inferred—except perhaps Beethoven's admiration for Mozart. Kerman also points out that Beethoven again used the minuet of K. 464 in Op. 132 and that Mozart himself, when already a master, had modeled K. 464 on Haydn's Op. 20 No. 4.

For an artist to use his predecessors in this way only seems astonishing if you assume that he is trying to break radically from them. Why does Kerman make this assumption about Beethoven, even though it goes against facts that he himself cites? Melodrama, like mediocrity, perpetuates itself, and having set out to deliver (though of course "only in small part") "the rich disorder of involvement," Kerman is driven to find, even in the earliest quartets, a suitably melodramatic image of Beethoven. Fortunately there is one close at hand: the old-fashioned conventional image of Beethoven-the-Revolutionary, the thundering iconoclast, the man who freed music. (We see now, incidentally, the intended effect of the references to Webern.) Thus everything has to be incredibly lurid and thrilling: "disruption" must be found where none exists, and "dissatisfaction with the *status quo*"

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where there is none beyond that of any extraordinarily ambitious young artist bent on matching the highest achievements of his greatest contemporaries; and the Op. 18 quartets cannot be heard and described as the thoroughly delightful, occasionally rather stolid pieces that they really are, but must be subjected to vastly overblown rhetoric —"The frantic intensity of Op. 18, Nos. 1-3, the faceless bluster of No. 4, the glossy tour de force of No. 5." How far Kerman is from getting the point of these pieces, and how severely he violates their "integrity" as "individual works of art" in order to make them fit his view of Beethoven's development, can be seen from his absurd and pompous assertion that "Wit . . . is a dangerous game—Haydn's game, not Beethoven's. His sense of humor is not far to be trusted at this time of his life."

And of course Kerman's adoption of the revolutionary pseudo-Beethoven also compels him to adopt the old stereotyped notion of Haydn and Mozart. "Beethoven," he proclaims at one point, "was more interested in following up dazzling new ideas than in polishing classic medallions." Since there has to be a rigid, inhibiting *status quo* for the revolutionary to be dissatisfied with, the other side of the coin that has the familiar scowling Titan on its obverse must be a classic medallion. We can see this stereotype, and the crudity of Kerman's whole view of Beethoven's relation to his predecessors, in his easy way with words like "convention" and "norm," in his uncritical use of phrases like "the classical framework" and "the classical scheme," and in his comment on a perfectly routine moment in Op. 18 No. 2: "So much for Beethoven's concern for musical etiquette in an age of periwigs and powder."

Kerman's view of Beethoven's development also causes him to distort the later works, for though things get better as we move on to Beethoven's middle period—Kerman has some genuine interest in the quartets as music and hence can describe more passages more accurately—he still has his eye on Op. 131. "A new world was being explored" after the *Eroica,* he tells us, "and if the string quartet was to find a place in it at all, it had to smash the fragile, decorous boundaries set by the classic image of chamber music." Yet having picked the "unification of the four-movement form" and the "sense of total integration" that we find in Op. 131 as the goal towards which Beethoven's development must be seen to be heading from 1799 on, and having (of course rightly) picked the *Eroica* as an important turning-point in that development, Kerman has to do some scuffling to explain the fact that the *Eroica* has four exceedingly independent and well-defined movements: "But in a way, the revolution of the *Eroica* Symphony seems to have marked a temporary setback to this development, or rather, a radical deepening of the terms of the problem, which was bound to delay its solution. The individual movements now grow so terrific that even Beethoven cannot always face them appropriately

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one to the next. Only the Ninth Symphony—not yet the Third—succeeds in assembling four titanic statements as a fully coherent whole." No defense is given for this strange and arbitrary judgment.

The worst such distortion occurs in the section on the last quartets —despite the fact that it is by far the best section of the book. Having finally reached the music that he has been dangling in front of our (and his own) noses all this time, Kerman perks up enough to make not only perceptive individual remarks about this or that passage but also an occasional illuminating generalization. His statement, for example, that "the unique richness of the last period derives exactly from the duality of introspection and solicitation, the inward-outward, public-private aspect of the art," seems to me excellent. But the damaging effects of his overall view are nowhere more evident than in his treatment of Op. 130, which like the *Eroica* has large and extremely well-defined movements that are highly diverse, and which therefore, among the last quartets, has least of the "integration" and "unification" that interest Kerman and that make Op. 131 for him the culmination of Beethoven's development. As his opening speculations on history suggested, Kerman is very fond of polarities and large black-and-white oppositions, and so when he comes to Op. 130 he simply charges off everything that makes it unlike the embodiment of "integration," Op. 131, to the opposite of integration: "dissociation." Thus he speaks of Op. 130 as "Beethoven's most dissociated composition" and as "toying with the dissociation of its own sensibility," and he asserts that it "celebrates dissociation," that it is the product of "the fragmented imagination," and that it "bears in its very blood the seeds of disruption."

I leave it to the reader to check these judgments against his own hearing of the works—to me they seem dead wrong. The point is that by adopting the view of Beethoven's development that compels him to make them, Kerman has misrepresented, and vastly oversimplified, the real nature of Beethoven's achievement. Of course Beethoven revolutionized sonata style, but as Tovey showed again and again, the nature of his revolution can be seen not only in the "integration" of Op. 131 but also in the dramatic contrasts among movements of works like the *Eroica* and Op. 130. Kerman, however, thinks these works have to be explained away, or seen as not genuinely revolutionary, because he consistently confuses the special sort of "integration" or "unification" he's looking for with aesthetic unity or value. This confusion is also what leads him to imply that the "balance among the various movements" is "more viable" in Beethoven's mature works than in those of Haydn and Mozart—which is about as sensible as saying that the poetic methods of *The Waste Land* are "more viable" than those of the *Iliad*. "Historical views of art," Tovey once wrote, "are apt to be too exclusively progressive and to regard higher and lower degrees of organization in an art-form as differing like truth and falsehood."

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What's astonishing is that anyone who not only has read Tovey but who obviously admires him could have written this book, for it was precisely the image of Beethoven projected by Kerman that Tovey spent his life arguing against. He once spoke of Beethoven as "the most conservative of revolutionists; a Revolutionist without the R," and in another place he asserted that "enormously as the power of his art increased with its range, his development maintains a perfect continuity with the art of Mozart and Haydn." In fact Kerman himself once pointed out in the pages of this magazine that one of the most important of the "standard notions about the classical composers" that Tovey revised was the notion that "Beethoven effected a revolutionary break from the formalism of Mozart and Haydn." And yet when we clear away the fog of Kerman's prose—the endless analyses, lectures, speculations, and what-not—what we find is that old standard notion back again. To draw a literary parallel, it's almost as though someone had written a book on the English novel lavishly praising F. R. Leavis and yet concluding that Meredith and Thackeray were, after all, better than George Eliot and Henry James. The sad irony of Kerman's book is that his need to preen and pontificate, to play the deep thinker, to appear at once erudite and chic—in short, his need to impress his audience—leads him to forget what he and the rest of us have learned from Tovey. For Tovey's view of the classical composers, like the historical phenomenon it was intended to explain, is extraordinarily complex, and the articulation of a complex point of view is not compatible with the sort of writing Kerman now seems to want to do.

Therefore I recommend that in addition to reading (or re-reading) Tovey, readers of THE HUDSON REVIEW who want a detailed guide to Beethoven's quartets get Phillip Radcliffe's excellent little book *Beethoven's String Quartets*. It's everything that Kerman's book is not: cleanly written, unpretentious, selective, helpful, and genuinely learned rather than merely pedantic. Moreover, ordered from England it only costs $2.10—as against a preposterous $10.00 for Kerman's.

One final thing about *The Beethoven Quartets* demands comment: the remarkably beautiful 1815 portrait of Beethoven that appears on the dust-jacket and as the frontispiece. It's evidently been reproduced only once before and Kerman deserves our gratitude for unearthing it. W. J. Turner once wrote of the effect of turning from the conventional music-shop portraits of Mozart to look at a genuine one: "instead of that smooth, regular young beauty you see a straight jutting profile with a too prominent nose and an extraordinary salience of the upper lip, and for an instant you feel as if you have had a revelation." One feels something like that upon closing Kerman's book and being confronted by the somber, determined, watchful face on its cover.

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VERNON YOUNG

# Poetry, Politics and Pornography

A FRIEND TO WHOM I HAD delivered the opinion that *Persona* was at bottom fraudulent wrote me in reply that he had accepted fraud as a common denominator of Bergman's recent films and now viewed them simply as good or bad theatre. To what extent theatre can be fraudulent and remain "good" may well be a matter for the individual's discrimination. Yet I wonder if most educated people today don't accept fraud, unwittingly, as a common denominator of all the public arts. Towards film they tend to adopt the attitude that the medium is not to be taken seriously. From the point of view of the grave, very little is to be taken seriously. While we pretend to wakefulness, the expressible content of life may not so whimsically be dismissed. Since a film is neither a philosophic proposition nor, commonly, a political manifesto, most filmgoers find it tiresome to consider whether or not it "makes sense"; hence, a widening gap prevails between the moving images that seduce and the implications that stupefy. And the gap is further widened precisely by those whose obligation is to bridge it, whose function should consist in saying what a work of art is good for: the film critics. In magazines for the film buff, writers are all too numerous who support the imaginative poverty of the new mindless cinema with a cant of their own. That they're not confined to such journals can be tested by consulting the pages of the international press. A characteristic sample of what I have in mind is a statement made by the *Times* (London) film critic in defense of Godard's *Made in U.S.A.*:

> If, instead of trying to decipher its political significance, if any, we said it was a film "about" the relationship between a shot of a cold white wall with "Liberté" scrawled across it in blue and the immediately succeeding shot of Anna Karina against a burning yellow door which fills the entire frame, we should probably be much nearer the mark.

Which mark, Mr. Taylor? (Prithee, let's talk fustian a little and gull them!) If audience sensibilities were not so uncertainly lodged between the barbarian and the *chic*-at-heart, few films given votes of confidence lately would survive any more serious analysis than the foregoing. The "advanced cinema" audience has been brainwashed by film journalists who follow the bent of their cousins, the art critics: when the object yields no pleasure, invent some, or resign yourself to having no professional justification. The result is self-evident. The more frivolous the film, the better chance it has to win a film-festival award and the

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higher the price paid for its distribution rights. I have no objection to a film which is nothing but colour, movement and music—for ten minutes. If I'm going to spend two hours with people represented as having stakes in the world I want finer delights for my emotional investment. Even frivolity has its logic (in art). I think it's important to decide if a film-maker intended frivolity or if he simply landed there because his thoughts were muddled. And I firmly believe that if we suppose his film to have "political significance" we should by all means try to "decipher" it; this touches us where we live, if not today, hereafter!

Claude Lelouch's *A Man and A Woman,* which has been running forever in the capitals, is a comparatively innocuous example of the new escapism, all style, speed and tease. Lelouch had one eye on the *Magnum* annual, one ear cocked towards Godard. There's nothing he can't execute, cinematically; he can even simulate the rim of the profound. I recall most vividly the racially refined faces of Jean-Louis Trintignant and Anouk Aimée, during a wind-ruffled interlude on a ferry-boat, saying nothing, hands making tentative advances towards an intimacy not yet acknowledged. Expecting something fateful from the inceptive dialogue about previous marriages, violent death and the preference for saving a dog rather than a Rembrandt from a fire, I was duly attentive. Yet nothing, after all, was conjunctive. In this love story of an auto racer and a script girl who improbably talk like a book—a book for the Left Bank—there are no insights, only photoflashes. Lelouch had a subject for his first film, *Avec Des Si*—the irony of mistaken continuity (within the film). He tried something like it again with his next, *The Girl and the Guns*—tried too hard. If advance reports may be relied on, his fourth film will duplicate the method—if it is a method—of *A Man and A Woman;* which is to say that it makes elaborate plans for a journey with no destination. At present Lelouch's nervous energy is in excess of his sense of reality and he's in danger of being governed by the tour de force, like Orson Welles and Roman Polanski. For this reason it is not reassuring to hear that he has been collaborating with the High Camp sector (Godard, Varda, Resnais) on a film about Vietnam (not made there and anti-American—of course).

Of Alexander Kluge's *Abschied von Gestern (Anita G.)*—called *Yesterday Girl* in England—there seems to be a widely insinuated notion that the film is a contribution to political criticism. The notion is as arch as the title of the film and provocation for it is not hard to discover. Kluge put his sister in the leading role of Anita G., identifying her as Jewish, as who should say, "If you don't like my sister you don't like Jews and if you don't like my movie, which is funny and anti-German, you're not a liberal." The gudgeons at Venice in 1966 swallowed Kluge's hook and gave him the Grand Prize. A special award from the Italians went to Alexandra, his sister. What the film says for

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Jews or against *Wirtschaftswunder* Germany is for its defenders to expound. What we see is Miss Anita G., jailbait from the Eastern Zone, with the brains of a shrimp, proto-criminal instincts and a will of butter, aimlessly casing West Germany for a berth or a job, convinced all the while that she's worthier and wiser than anyone. Social reality never gets a hearing in this film; every male adult—doctor, lawyer, *polizei* chief—is depicted as a blockhead. At one stage in her cyclic journey between jails, Anita G. attends college to no point and jumps her hotel because she can't pay her bill (why would a college student be living in a hotel?); at another we're supposed to believe she could stagger miles down a main highway bearing a loaded suitcase, without being offered a lift! All interior scenes are crudely lighted, clumsily staged, and when Kluge senses that his narrative is fatally going to pieces he fills the breach with those Silent-Film speed-ups done to death by Richard Lester, if not by Chris Marker *et al* ten years ago. This film is trash, launched through moral blackmail as a herald of the new German cinema. There is no new German cinema—yet. There is only a handful of anti-German Germans making amateur movies.

As for Miss Kluge's performance, I suppose it was as credible as the incredible continuity permitted. Further than that compliment I'm not prepared to go. Perhaps an aging member of the Venice jury was. We live in the Age of Lolita—which was again corroborated at Cannes this spring when the Best Actress prize was bestowed on Pia Degermark, the 17-year-old nothing co-starred with Tommy Berggren (a little older and, if anything, nothinger) in Bo Widerberg's *Elvira Madigan.* What of the film itself, if one can separate it from the only inhabitants that supply its *raison d'etre?* The historical source from which it was prettified demanded a more subtle conception by far. Lieutenant Sparre, in actuality, was something of a tomcat before he met Elvira, the tightrope walker. A Don Juan from the Swedish landed gentry who, in the cause of true love, repudiates his class, deserts his regiment and throws away his life—his life *and Elvira's:* there's the real story, there's where the dog lies buried! Or in any case this is one potent suggestion held out by the material; there must be many more. What Widerberg chose to express was nothing dangerous, only the dying fall. He settled for a prolonged, rainbow-hued picnic in the woods of Denmark, with no suggestion that Sparre was a flabby egoist who was killing the thing he loved. After an hour-and-a-half of puppy-babble and pussy-fret, we learn nothing, *nothing whatever,* about these star-crossed ephebes except that they were stupid enough to reach the brink of starvation and perish.

The French, themselves flatterers of the first rank, were overjoyed with this iridescent idyll. Seemingly, Widerberg had followed the strategy of Agnes Varda's boorish pastorale, *Le Bonheur,* by enlisting Mozart to provide whatever emotional lift might have been otherwise wanting. To give Widerberg his due, he had recognized the film-saving

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powers of Baroque music (Vivaldi) some years before. Widerberg is a smart weathercock. Back in '65 when he was trying to crowd Antonioni with that silly sex-on-the-floor film I reviewed in these pages, he was simultaneously giving public lectures urging the Welfare State to ratify the sexual emancipation of 15-year-old girls by equipping them with the requisite safety devices. Then he felt the wind shift, if only in his own mind; his preface to *Elvira Madigan* announces that free love is indefensible—if for no other reason, it is not conducive to survival. But that was in another country, and besides, the wench is dead . . . . Widerberg knows how to play close to the appearance of the real thing. Should he ever discover wherein his integrity lies, he might just become a poet.

Vilgot Sjöman never will. His unacknowledged legislation will flow in other channels—towards what end is dismayingly predictable . . . . One of those touring Americans whose interest in Sweden is frankly directed to below the belt-line, greeted me with stars in his eyes after previewing Sjöman's latest release (and I do mean release), *I Am Curious*. When I pressed him to relate what had stoked his visible wonder, all he could come up with was "a fabulous back-tracking shot" of a couple fornicating on the balustrade of the Royal Palace in Stockholm. In truth, perhaps no other sequence of the film would better stand for the whole. The whole that I saw, which is but a half. Sjöman took nearly two years to assemble this alleged documentary persiflage of life under Social Democracy. Unable to reduce his total film mileage to negotiable limits, he was permitted by Sandrews to cut two feature-length films from the accumulated stock. (*I Am Curious, Gold* and *I Am Curious, Blue*. Perhaps I should remind the reader that blue and gold are the colours of the Swedish flag.) The content of the first half is quite enough for anyone with as fastidious a stomach as mine. Such fun as may accrue from on-the-spot answers by the public and the politicians to the question, for example, "Do you think we have a class society in Sweden?," is not inexhaustible. Actually, the questionnaires and the cross-cut editing of advertising messages and political slogans comprise a stalking-horse for the preferred pastime of the odious young female, porcine and violent, who conducts the survey. She is obsessed by the 57 (?) positions of sexual intercourse, most of which we are not allowed to take on trust, for she is unsparingly photographed with her beefy sparring partner, often intercut with closeups of the genial caterpillar, himself—Vilgot Sjöman, leering and avuncular. Before the copulating marathon is run, the tramp shoots and castrates her stud in a fantasy episode which is hopefully linked to her rebellion against Father, a slob who has done nothing useful since fighting against Franco. Suck whatever sense you can from this trifling with Freud and political action. *I Am Curious* (hereafter to be thought of as *I Am Spurious*) is the sewer towards which Swedish film, in certain hands, has been heading for some time. Taken together with

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*Elvira Madigan,* with which at first glance it would appear to have no affinity, it suggests the plight of a society, deficient in the culture that would alone dignify its isolation, steadily substituting non-commitment for authentic living, at every level. Sex, so goes the rumor, is its resource; logically enough, a failing one. *Elvira Madigan* and *I Am Curious.* Sentimentality and pornography are the polar consequences of impotence: the former, all ideal extension without human contingency; the latter, the forked radish thing-in-itself, devoid of any ideal development to distinguish it from the coupling of rabbits. The net result, in either case, as Widerberg and Sjöman were impelled to reveal, is murder.

By contrast, Luis Buñuel's invitation to the *voyeur, Belle de Jour,* is merely nasty-minded. In a Thurber fairy tale, the Golux declares, "I had high hopes of being evil when I was two, but in my youth I came upon a firefly burning in a spider's web. I saved the victim's life." "The firefly's?" "No, the spider's. The blinking arsonist had set the web on fire." . . . This is Buñuel's predicament; he never knows where his worst interests lie. *Belle de Jour* exploits a puritan solution: gloat over Catherine Deneuve in her panties, then punish her for the provocation—and make the form of the punishment, which includes smearing, as salacious as the spectacle you have approvingly witnessed. (What women derive from these films is too ambiguous a speculation to be tackled here.) The clinical veracity upheld for this film is a straw grasped by those who need sanction to relish the tawdry situation: that of a married bourgeois somnambulist who "works" by day in a brothel, since only humiliation has power to assure her she's alive. Quite unconvincingly conveyed, however. And another prizewinner (Venice, '67); Buñuel's sad valediction: in thirty-eight years of filmmaking, his occasional genius has been mainly employed to extend the limits of our nausea. Judged within cinematic bounds, *Belle de Jour* is shoddy stuff. The colour is vile, the editing is harsh; spreading the denouément throughout the film is gratuitous and an impediment to whatever suspense might have been conjured from this paltry and profane enterprise. All the actors save Francisco Rabal (whose role *couldn't* have been designed for this film!) seemed put upon and resentful. Miss Deneuve joins the long procession of females who have managed to ambulate through a two-hour movie wearing a single expression—nay, wearing none.

After 10,000 years (give or take a few thousand) of standing upright rationally, mankind still looks to the pelvic area of the opposite sex for its *axis mundi* and is universally unable to coax a pleasure principle from the orientation. Japan, relieved of its suppression overnight by Western conquest and enlightenment (the truth about the human animal?) awakes with a cry of rage, finding itself unattractively naked and unequipped for the freedom of spirit that should have ensued from the overthrow of conduct. Films that claim to reflect

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the contemporary Japanese attitude seem to be of two kinds, both hateful. On the one hand there is the cold curiosity of, e.g., Shinoda's *With Beauty and Sorrow,* 1965 (in which two Lesbians destroy the man who threatens their commitment to each other), or Teshigahara's impeccably structured fables (*The Case,* 1962; *Woman in the Dunes,* 1964; *The Face of Another,* 1966). The stylistic equivalents for these films in the West would be Antonioni at his most static moments and Alan Resnais at his most cryptic. On the other there is the latent hysteria of *The Amourist,* 1966, directed by Shohei Imamura: black humour at its inkiest, somewhat turgid from the indignation that from time to time boils over. Imamura's anti-hero is a grubby little photo-pornographer, dominated by the conviction that he is an unappreciated benefactor of humanity. In view of the fact that he despises the mankind he serves and, though virtually impotent, is not aloof from the promptings to which he contemptuously caters, his argument lacks persuasion. His domain is a waterside jungle where he lives on a boat and alternatively sweats to satisfy the concupiscent widow he lives with and to seduce her 15-year-old daughter. Eventually the widow dies, demented, the girl becomes a tart, her brother expects to bribe himself through the university exam. To mend all, the pornographer invents a life-size doll which, with no personality problems, will purvey sex like a machine, hence bringing man freedom from sexual disquietude. The poor wretch's devotion to this creature prevents his patenting the invention for market; at the end of the film, the dockside boat unmoors itself and floats out of the harbor, bearing him and his ersatz Venus towards a receding horizon of oceanic ecstasy. . . . If the scrabbling, simian behaviour of the characters don't alienate you instantly or soon thereafter, you may find a sort of insane consistency in this film, not altogether irrelevant to the collective descent into hell on which Japanese life, in common with ours, appears to have embarked. "I think we have thrown Japan morally backwards a thousand years; she is going to adopt our vices (which are much too large for her)." That observation was made by Lafcadio Hearn—in 1893.

If much of the cultural dropout (that terrible conception) in the West has been taking place in one of the principal citadels, England, it may yet be from England that the most vocal retort to the consequences will come. *Privilege,* 1967, the first full-length film of Peter Watkins, is a case in point, happily free from the stammering montage of today's pop style in moviemaking and addressed directly, scornfully and with stunning colour effects, to the Pop subject—with a difference. I regret not being able to discuss it further but I prefer to spend my remaining wordage on *Accident,* one of the two or three superlative films I've seen among the 130 to which I subjected myself during the year. Joseph Losey is the American film-maker who has been helping the English to fight their class struggle, in such films

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as *The Criminal, Eva, The Servant, King and Country*. I had not previously been convinced of his merit by those who were in fact merely endorsing his aims. A certain theatricalism as well as an ill-concealed personal testiness impaired many moments in his earlier work. *Accident,* again with the assistance of Harold Pinter, is the sensitive, authentic film predicted by his more discerning supporters. It suggests that Losey has come to acquire respect for at least the setting and ambience of a vestigial tradition, without surrendering his sense of the evil that haunts the remembering oak and the storied cloister. Few films have had a more portentous beginning: the quiet Oxford house, the accelerating roar and crash of the automobile, the long quiet broken only by a far-off dog in the night; Bogarde rescuing the numbed girl from the wreck; the police inquiry, a constable apologizing for his cough, Bogarde momentarily breaking down into a stutter and a facial twitch. By now we are in the midst of life and expect heartbreaking deeds. They come to pass, retroactively (the parabolic form is beautifully utilized) and always politely, a tragedy with National Hunt Rules—never confess, with one ill-placed remark, that the issue is lethal. Three men—two and a boy—unconsciously desire death by way of the customary oblivion: an inscrutable girl, probably just blank, who wants nothing, except perhaps the lineaments of gratified desire. The two men are dons, both restive under the yoke of the years and of marriage too long endured. The one (Stanley Baker) is a scant-born gentleman, a productive hack and a fumbling wolf; the other (Bogarde) is a scholar with civil courage who has schooled himself to greater decency than his passions dictate. The boy is just a Yang looking for his Yin, a cheerful killer from the lordly classes, all surface candour and physical confidence. Bogarde contains himself, the others share the girl. Was the boy driving, or was she, at the fatal hour? You never know; you assume—else why does she leave Oxford? No matter, the youth asks for death and gets it, being privileged. The men die a little more; they're used to dying and they keep stiff upper lips. The girl (from Vienna, we're told, but it's not likely) steps on the boy's face, Bogarde saves hers and what does she learn? That fair wenches cannot want favours, while the world is so full of amorous fools. In the small dark hours between the "accident" and the birth of his son, Bogarde's gratuitous desire is consummated.

If the lingering camera, spying out shadows and listening for night-jars, restates Antonioni, the general temper is closer to the understatement of Ford's novel, *The Good Soldier* ("This is the saddest story . . .). Here, youth has its poor innings and "drops out" speedily. Sweet Thames continues to flow softly, nurturing the lawns beneath the feet of bloody-minded man, and insatiable mortality has the last cry.

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LUCY R. LIPPARD

# Beauty and the Bureaucracy

WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS and less than the best advice, Mayor Lindsay's and August Heckscher's names have adorned (as patrons) the labels of some twenty-five sculptures placed around New York City for a month to make up "Sculpture in Environment," the first group exhibition sponsored by a city agency and pretty much the first indication that the City has heard of contemporary art.[1] Total success could not have been hoped for. A more sensible and sensitive approach could have been. The exhibition can be considered optimistically as a Beginning, a Step in The Right Direction, or pessimistically as a howling failure underlining the futility of such shotgun weddings between beauty and the bureaucracy.

The official excuse is the time element. Artists had only twelve weeks to prepare for the show, hardly sufficient to make pieces specifically for the sites they chose themselves. Planned as a "demonstration project" rather than a success—always a poor idea—the exhibition was pushed up to coincide with the Cultural Showcase Festival, an event that could not have made less difference to the men in the street or in the showcase. Why, if it was (as it was) such an important and belated step for New York, was it allowed to be rushed and put out in such a half-assembled fashion? It should be said, however, that the City Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs is not solely at fault. They spent their money (and the money donated to them) and took the "expert" advice they were offered. It is these "experts," and the artists, who must share the blame.

Aside from the esthetic qualities of the artists and work selected (I for one think it was about 50% a rotten choice), the fundamental problem seems to lie in a lack of conviction about the nature of a public art. One cannot just take a sculpture out of the studio, dump it in the gutter, and call it public art. A good deal of the work so treated looked like nothing so much as evicted furniture. Granted, some people who had never noticed sculpture before noticed it because of this show. But I was disappointed because the present achievement indicates a poverty of resources (both of available art and of its public accessibility) that I know to be untrue.

A public visual art in America would presumably be a democratic art. Most fine art is traditionally private, confined to salons and galleries. Going to a good school does not guarantee any familiarity

[1] The very first indication, which probably inspired the current show, was the presence of several Tony Smith sculptures in Bryant Park last winter—a far more successful event than its successor. Both shows, however, are welcome signs of awakening, if not yet of Renaissance, at City Hall.

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with the visual arts, nor does living in New York City, at the moment the acknowledged center of international art. Conditions are improving (or degenerating, depending on how you look at it). Museums, which make the same private art semi-public, are full on weekends; they are full of a public that Marshall McLuhan mistakenly considers visually oriented. On the contrary, the American public seems as "primitive" as its more superficially tribal contemporaries. It touches; it has to touch sculpture, even paintings. Art has to be felt up to be seen. The time-honored custom of kicking the tires of a car in fond admiration has apparently been transferred to the esthetic realm.

From the semi-public exposure of a private art to a truly public art is a big step. Several critics of recent sculpture exhibitions have noted the obvious and discouraging fact that transfer from studio or gallery to public site is usually to the sculpture's disadvantage. The city show compounded this state of affairs by choosing several pieces disastrously unsuitable to their new locations, pieces which had no chance outside of an intimate space. If only small works were available at such short notice, they should have been omitted altogether. Public art cannot be selected simply on the basis of someone liking or disliking an artist's general production. It must be done by people who know the real character of many artists' work very well, and can judge its aptitude for public display.

This is a specialized task. The public at large cannot choose the art to be placed in its cities any more than it can elect presidents of state universities, directors of government laboratories, or perhaps the President of the United States. Everyman's taste as evinced in theatre and television will not change the face of the city. The result would be bug-eyed children murals and more macro-cephalic Alices in Everyman's Wonderland (see Central Park). The selection should in fact be aristocratic, in the original sense of the word—the best. The placement, not the choice, should be democratic. Obviously the city was defeating its purpose by putting a minor work in the window of Vidal Sassoon's fashionable Madison Avenue beauty salon, or by squeezing a Robert Murray of great effect and high quality (*Athabasca*) into the cramped porch of the Jewish Museum. Most passersby in these areas already have access to plenty of culture. There was one exhibit in Harlem: two small black Calder stabiles in the center of a driveway at the "Devonshire House" in the London Terrace Apartments, virtually invisible from the street. A large red piece, placed in any number of more public locations (the projects around 134th Street and Fifth Avenue, Frawley Circle, Mount Morris Park, to name a few) would at least have been visible, and a Louise Nevelson wall would have been preferable to her two decidedly indoor sculptures placed outside the CBS building.

Art placed in a civic site must be decorative, commanding, easy to take in at a glance, but difficult, stimulating, various enough in re-

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ceiving light and atmospheric change to provoke continued pleasure, engagement and surprise. The bulk and "monumentality" that make it initially visible to a hurried or insensitive urban audience must be retained long enough to engage the viewer's thoughts. To become a landmark rather than an indistinguishable element of the urban collage, a sculpture, like a building, must retain its autonomy, involve its environment enough to augment but not be absorbed by it. The handsome, or decorative condition is more easily fulfilled than the second, esthetic condition. At times sculpture of lesser significance but a high degree of decorative éclat comes off better than an excellent piece less suitable to public settings. Lyman Kipp's red and yellow archway on the walkway to the Mall in Central Park *looked* better than the David Von Schlegell at Union Carbide and the Murray at the Jewish Museum because of its broad planes of color. So did Antoni Milkowski's open notched diamond at Kipps Bay and Bernard Rosenthal's cube balanced on its corner at Astor Place, because their contrast to the city's grids provided the necessary visibility. Such contrast didn't work with the Paul Frasier at City Hall, or the Bernard Kirschenbaum at the Bethesda Fountain Terrace, both white monoliths that owe great debts to other artists. (Someone scrawled "Bob Morris did it better" across the former; Morris is a major sculptor who declined the City's invitation). In these cases simplicity added up neither to grandeur nor to any new sense of scale or decoration. Looking nice is a matter of design. One hopes for more from art.

The best locations chosen this time—best in regard to surrounding space and public accessibility—were the plazas at the Seagram, Union Carbide, Time-Life and CBS buildings, Kipps Bay, and Astor Place. The parks seem less pertinent, since they are already pleasant, and neutral environments, and as such present no challenge. The only example of a first-rate work in a first-rate site was Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* in front of the Seagram Building. It was notable not only because it was noticeable (a necessary prerequisite of public art) and because it was a major work—not only because of its bright orange-rust surface, its twenty-five-foot height or its haughty isolation from traffic and buildings—but because these combined to provide an inescapable impact or "presence," an indefinable quality of much recent non-relational work which Newman's sculpture has inherited from his painting. Yet not even this piece, for all its success, finally contributed any new dimensions to the concept of public sculpture.

While the results are yet to be tested, there is a growing concern among contemporary artists, especially the young, with the concept of monuments and public art. Several gallery shows last year included marvelous and currently impossible plans that indicate a departure from the traditional concepts of studio sculpture placed in a "garden" setting. Monuments, conventionally commemorating the

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past for an indeterminate future, can instead commemorate the present for the present, emphasizing the transitional aspect of modern life. The word monument, like official architecture, calls to mind a commemoration of past styles as well as past events. (Though an early use of the found object in an esthetic context is the custom of transforming cannons, mines, missiles and other military leftovers into public art by putting them on pedestals in parks.) Most people admit a certain fondness for the worst of the equestrian statues and "Roman" busts that adorn Central Park. Not that anyone sees them; unless you are looking for them, they are invisible, the green patina of the bronze blending attractively into the leaves or branches of any season. The nostalgia evoked is for a past that is not our own; the fondness is part of the stenographer's dream of Paris, part of the American public's attraction to royalty, to an historical elegance that precedes American history.

In one sense, the contemporary artist's concern with the monument is still more historicizing. Its sources and ideals are largely primitivist. The "presence" of the great blunted cylinder that is a gas or oil drum, a bulbous water tank high over the landscape on a graceful "stem," recalls the minarets, mounds, mastabas, obelisks, ziggurats, menhirs of ancient cultures. Robert Morris, when confronted with a long list of possible influences on his rigorously unified structures (Bauhaus, de Stijl, Constructivism, etc.), denied them all, citing the Egyptian funerary complex of Zoser (ca. 2650 B.C.) as his obvious source. Tony Smith, whose ideas on public art are the most fully formed (see *Art International,* Summer, 1967) exhibits his great modular monoliths in a dim, mysterious light so that their archaic quality is intensified by associations with a desolate grandeur. His piece in the city exhibition was well, if secretively, placed behind the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center, supporting his contention that his sculpture is best assimilated in areas the social organism has abandoned, "against its unfinished backs and sides, places oriented away from the focus of its well-being."

Much of the new work parallels the late eighteenth-century classicizing romanticism that produced a rather similar visionary primitivism as well as the better-known chinoiserie and artificial ruins (see Newman's "broken obelisk"). The Utopian aspect of the large scale and towering grandeur of much recent art also reflects an attempt at a new kind of social contact. Art in the 1930's, despite its would-be "proletarian" styles and subjects, failed to make contact with the working classes. Today artists may be exploiting the American respect for bigness, trying to reach the public by sheer impressiveness, by overwhelming, awe-inspiring scale, form, and beauty.

Even the *idea* of archeology itself, the hidden or enclosed, the complex conceptual or intellectual point buried in an impressive mass of purely physical bulk and monumentality, seems to appeal to some art-

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ists. Carl André, Robert Morris, Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson, among others, have plans for immense mounds, trenches, pits that would be experienced rather than optically recognized as wholes. Sol LeWitt projects sculpture so conceptual that it can be appreciated by the blind, and he has suggested encasing the Cellini cup in a cube of cement, or burying a cube sculpture deep underground (See *Artforum,* April, 1967). For precedent, one can go back to Plutarch's description of the tomb requested by Archimedes: a cylinder containing a sphere inscribed with the figure 3/2, the ratio of container to contained. Other modern proposals involve a more visible hermeticism: Christo's vinyl and rope "packages" allowed hints at the contained, as does his ambition to "package" a skyscraper, perhaps as an impermanent monument to characterless architecture. When Tony Smith had an exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum, he "packaged" an obtrusive and unmoveable academic sculpture in the largest room by building a structure of his own to cover it; the anachronism became contemporary. This led to the Utopian suggestion that Smith "cover" all the equestrian monuments in Central Park with black planar forms of his own, or that these statues, which all look alike when scattered around a park or city, be assembled in a single field, like toy soldiers in a monumental war game.

The city exhibition actually included two such hermetic, or ephemeral pieces, both serious, and of interest, though not very appropriate for a "demonstration project" in public art. Forrest Myers' *Searchin'* employed colored searchlights that stretched approximately a half-mile, to be "projected occasionally into the sky over Manhattan." The second, Claes Oldenburg's *Placid Civic Monument,* is described as "108 cubic feet of Central Park surface excavated and reinserted." After proposing a monumental traffic jam, and a scream monument that would echo through the city at 2 A.M., Oldenburg decided on this invisible sculpture—a 6 x 6 x 3′ trench between the Metropolitan Museum and Cleopatra's Needle—dug by two Union grave-diggers under the artist's supervision, and then filled up again. This was a disappointment not because it was something of a blindman's bluff, but because the time element has not allowed Oldenburg to construct any one of the numerous and undeniably important monuments he has projected over the years, among them a soft vinyl drainpipe, a giant hot dog, a fallen hat monument on the spot where Adlai Stevenson fell, and a cement cube at the intersection of Canal and Broadway, supposedly the central bomb target for New York.

All of these plans do not relate to an archaic past alone. They also take into consideration the modern environment itself. If art is to command the same attention that industry and technology do in a materialist world, then it must either compete or work with the non-art surroundings, what Tony Smith calls "an artificial landscape without any cultural precedents." It is ironic that so many artists today are

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involved with projects that demand huge spaces, surfaces, forms, and that they despair of ever being able to work in the scale they prefer. These shapes and surfaces already exist, in smokestacks, oil drums, building façades, water tanks. A good many artists have already recognized and adopted the vocabulary of the industrial landscape. The New Jersey Turnpike is rich in "abstract" industrial sources for sculpture, as are books of scientific or engineering diagrams. It is the artists' attempts to equal and surpass these sources that has led to the new concern with public art. The situation is made urgent by increasing opportunities to work in large scale, by increasing amounts of industrial money set aside for art, by new materials allowing more ambitious and fantastic conceptions to be attempted. Robert Grosvenor, one of the better sculptors working in monumental scale, unfortunately planned a piece too expensive for the city to install in its exhibition. Yet a prototypal Grosvenor in a scale wholly inaccessible to him exists in the huge diagonal shute over the East River Drive around 14th Street; backed up by three red, white and blue striped Con Ed smokestacks, the scene presents an awesome sculptural experience difficult for art to compete with. Oldenburg, echoing the Frenchman Arman, conceded this when he considered having his contribution to the show be simply a declaration of Manhattan as a work of art. "Actually," he said, "I feel very modest in the face of New York as a sculptural achievement."

Most artists who plan for public art seem to think in terms of attention-attracting color. It is true that there are areas of the city that are colorless, and others that drastically need broad expanses of good color, though not necessarily more little spots of color. Amid the yellow cabs, red trucks, bright clothes that swarm through the Plaza's plaza, Marisol's feeble attempt at a monument in black with planes of primary color fell flat, and not only because she is an artist with as little sense of scale as Fabergé. The urban environment is colorful to begin with. Poor neighborhoods are often the most colorful. The city does not need color, or mere color, it needs a kind of chromatic depth that only a few fine artists can provide.

A beginning has been made by the city's painting bright primary colors over the tin doors and windows of buildings scheduled for demolition on the upper west side. But think what else could be done with those dismal, moribund neighborhoods about to be replaced by high rent apartments, what could be done by commissioning artists to transform urban eyesores into works of art. What if some (not all) of the smokestacks were decorated by artists or painted solid colors? Hippies could be kept busy for years painting intricate psychedelicacies on such surfaces, as they have on their trucks and cars. Major artists concerned with civic rehabilitation would jump at the chance to have a free hand with a whole neighborhood. Posters are more decorative than gray fences marked Post No Bills, and the List Foundation has

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made a start in placing its art posters in the subways. Graffiti has its place. If there were blackboards in rest rooms and subways, everyone could have their say, and if it were offensive, anyone could erase or replace it. All art need not be permanent, or even dead "serious." Les Levine's *All-Star Cast* at the Time-Life building, four bulging clear plastic forms through which the participating public walks to become the "stars," proved one of the most popular of the City exhibits. A spherical gas tank in Pennsylvania has baseball stitches on it. The Silver Statue of Liberty on top of a building across from Lincoln Center is an improvement on some of the more ponderous culture at the Center itself (which, incidentally, just bought the small David Smith piece included in the city sculpture show, after having sacrificed the chance, several years ago, to make what would have been the only public commission ever received by this most important of American sculptors; they took another Henry Moore, another Calder, another Lippold instead).

What has been done so far is a drop in the basket. As a whole, New York may be a sculptural achievement, but its parts are less impressive. There are few recent buildings that command engagement and respect. Good sculpture could compensate for some of architecture's lacunae. And sculpture has one major advantage over architecture; it can be moved. Architecture, or anything else placed *in situ* for a long time, is likely to be taken for granted and eventually becomes part of the cementwork. The academic sculpture around town has become invisible because its stasis (statute, stature, status quo) is against it. Most people no longer see their environment once it has become familiar. Most of New York's neighborhoods are temporary. We could capitalize on the city's impermanent quality instead of sitting back and deploring it. With buildings cavalierly thrown up and mown down, permanent sculpture is often irrelevant. Good sculpture does not become automatically obsolete, but if its setting is changed, it may become unsuitable. One remedy might be for the city to build up a sculpture pool, or bank, by buying, commissioning or financing large sculpture (and paintings) for specific sites; the artist, while alive, could be consulted on a choice of other suitable sites when his piece was moved. New works could be added to the bank and exchanged with old, which would be moved to new locations. Eventually, the inhabitants of every twenty-block radius could have a chance to live with several sculptures over a period of years. And living with art is the only way really to understand and enjoy it. By this method public interest and curiosity might be kept at the relative intensity sustained by the gallery-going minority.

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Barnett Newman
THE BROKEN OBELISK
1963-67
Loften steel
25′ × 10′6″
"Sculpture in Environment," Seagram Build

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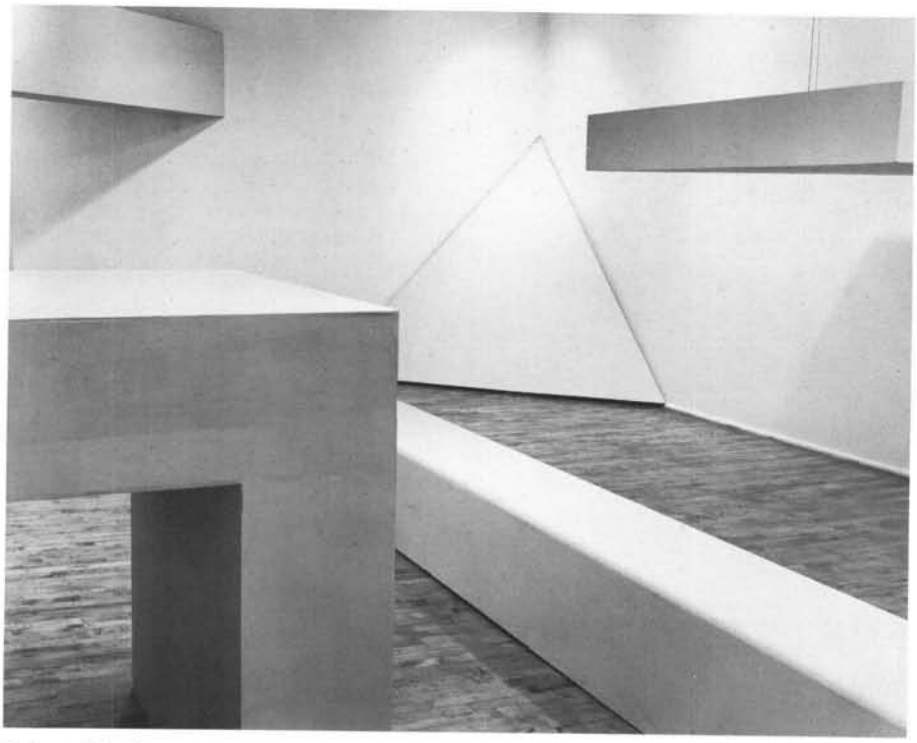

Robert Morris
INSTALLATION OF EXHIBITION
Green Gallery, New York, 1964

Tony Smith
INSTALLATION OF EXHIBITION
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, 1966
*(Courtesy Fischbach Gallery)*
Covered fountain at right

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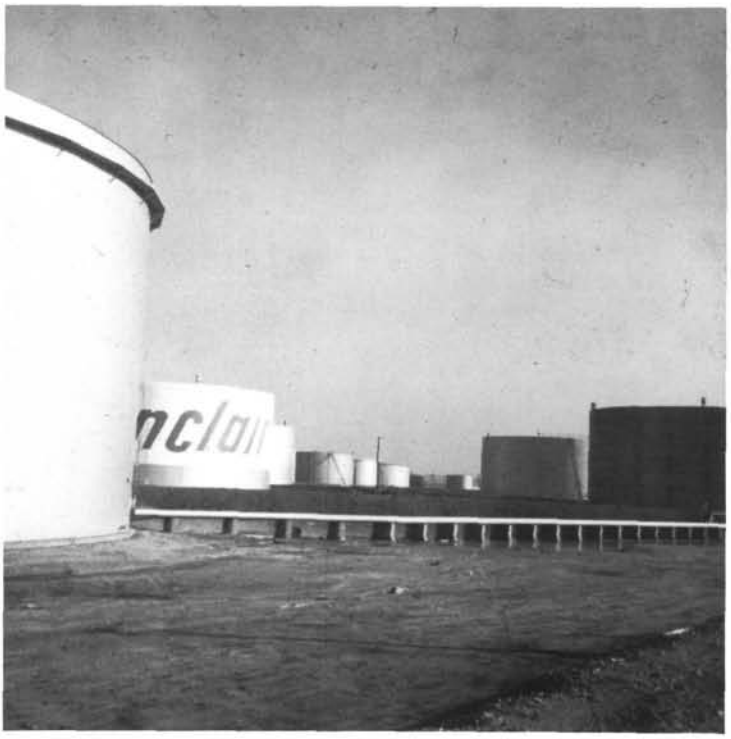

Untitled photograph
from color slide
by Dan Graham, 1966

Lyman Kipp
BOSS LINCO
1967 Painted plywood
14′ × 1½″ × 8′8½″
"Sculpture in Environment," Central Park M

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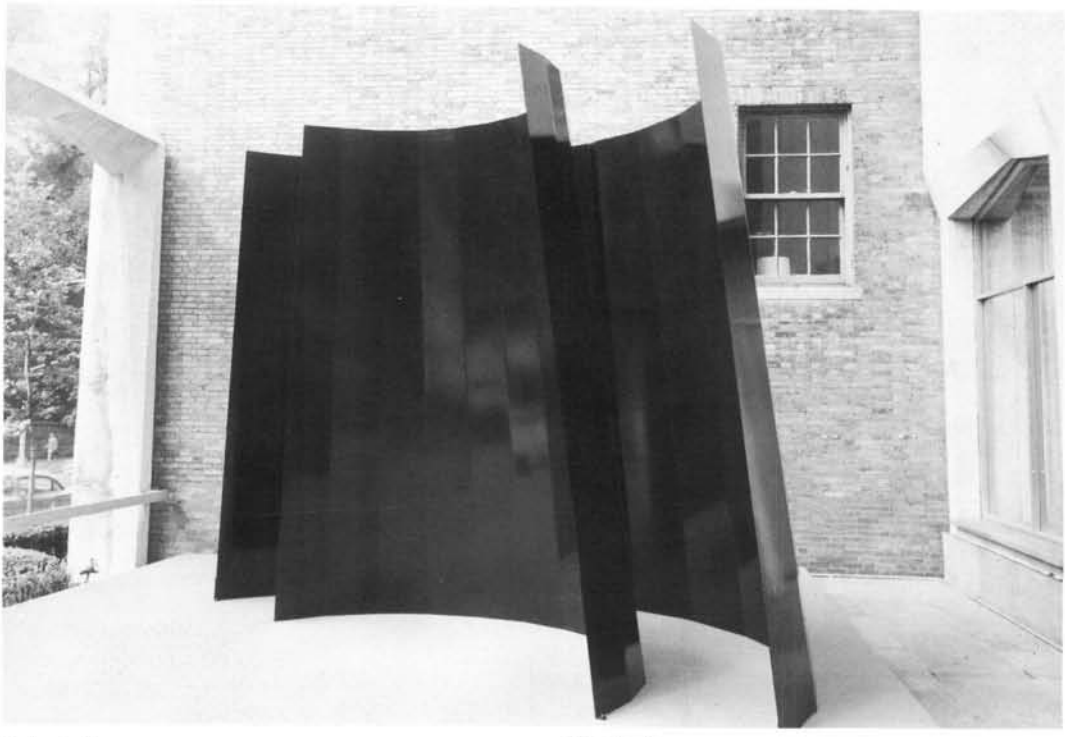

Robert Murray
ATHABASCA
1965-67, Painted Steel
144 × 216 × 96″
"Sculpture in Environment," Jewish Museum

Les Levine
ALL STAR CAST
Plexiglass, 1967
"Sculpture in Environment," Time-Life Building
*(Courtesy Fischbach Gallery)*

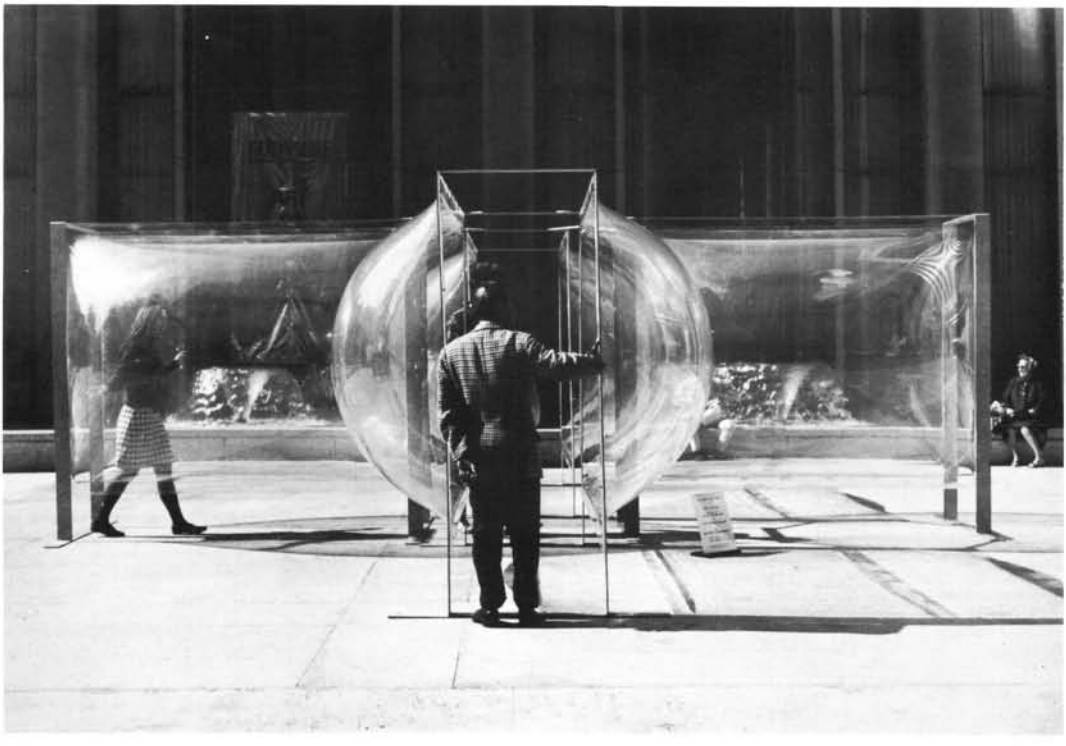

*Photo credits: Morris—Rudolph Burckhardt; Kipp—Fred W. McDarrah; Levine—John A. Ferrari*

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LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS: model

PHILHARMONIC HALL

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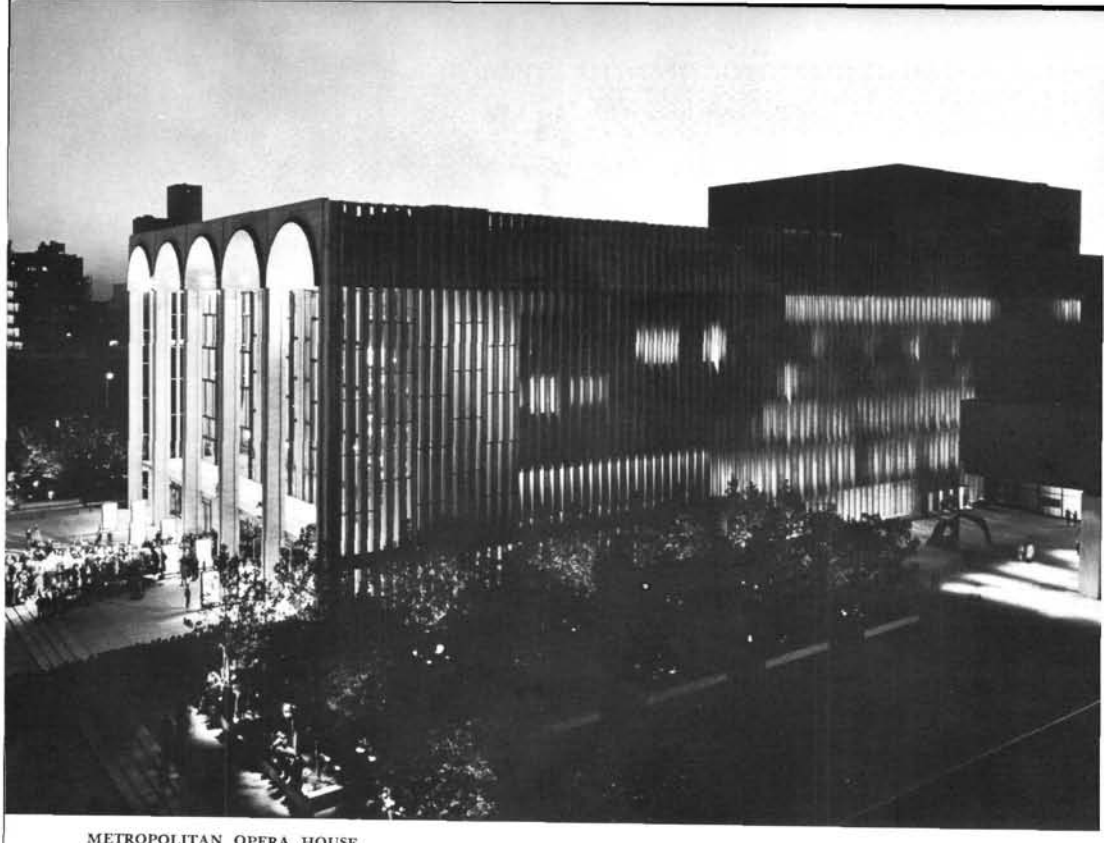
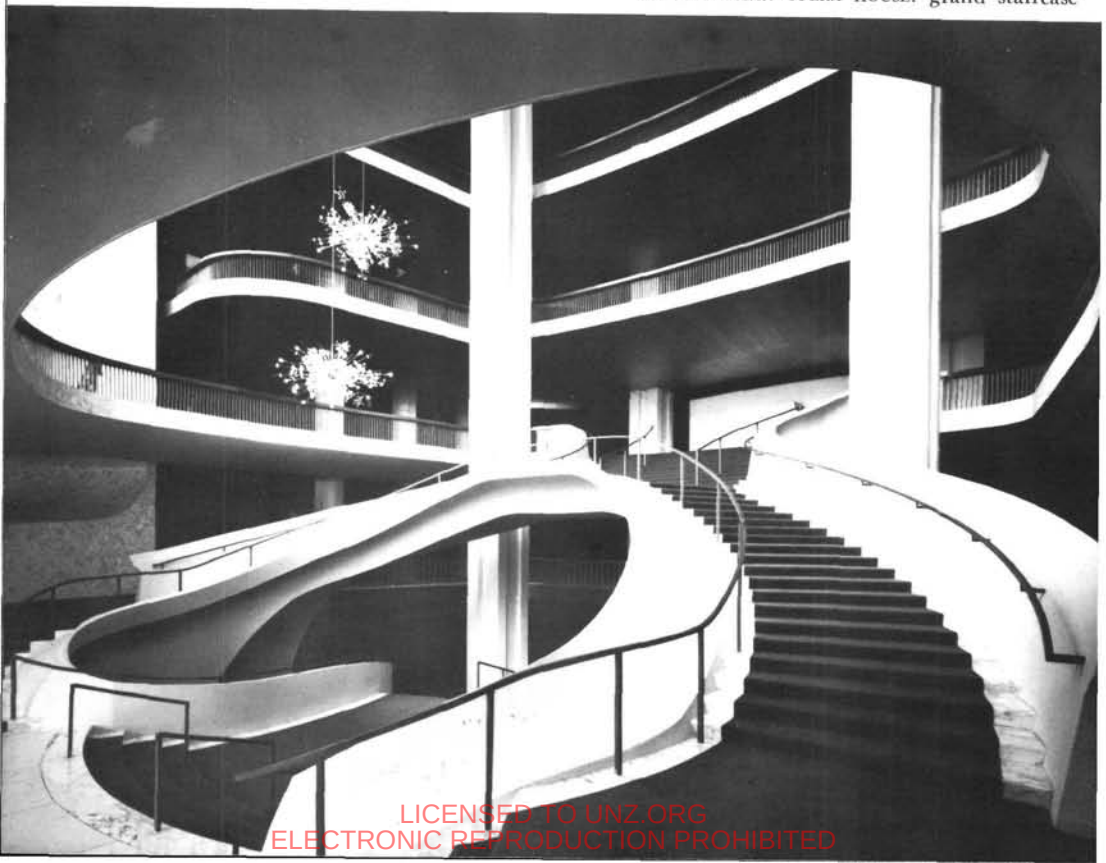


METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE: grand staircase



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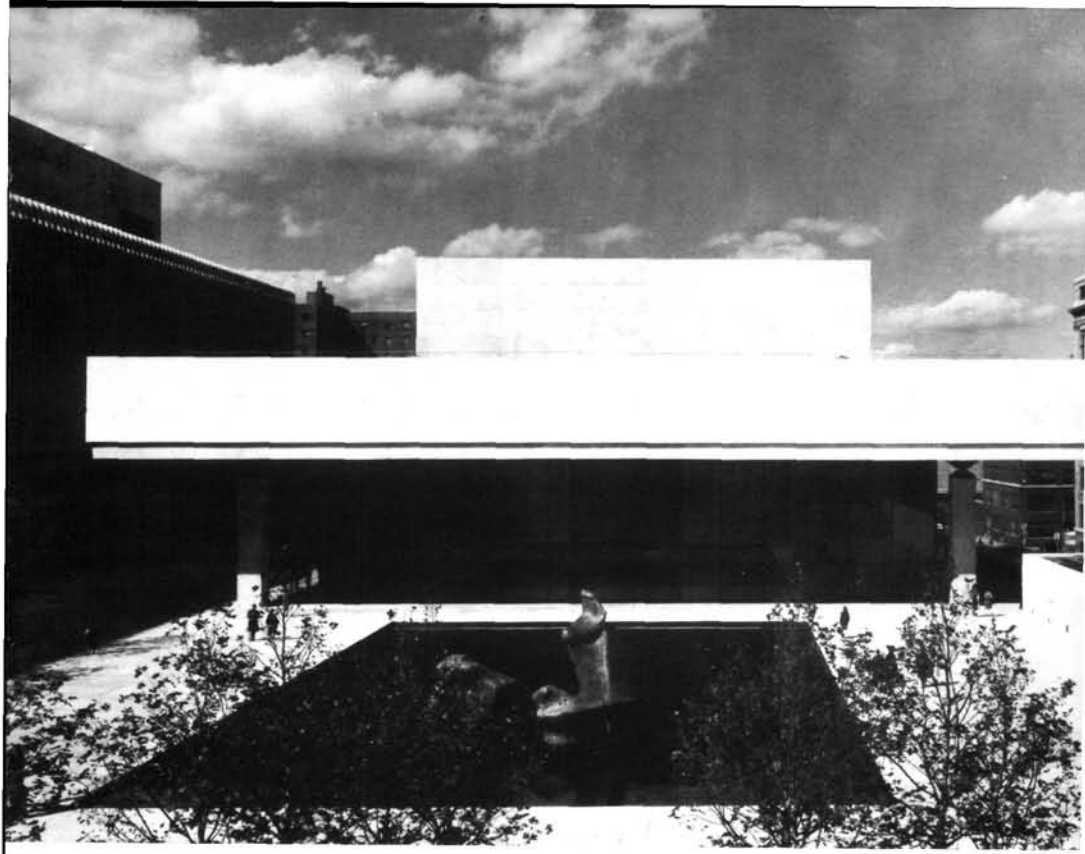
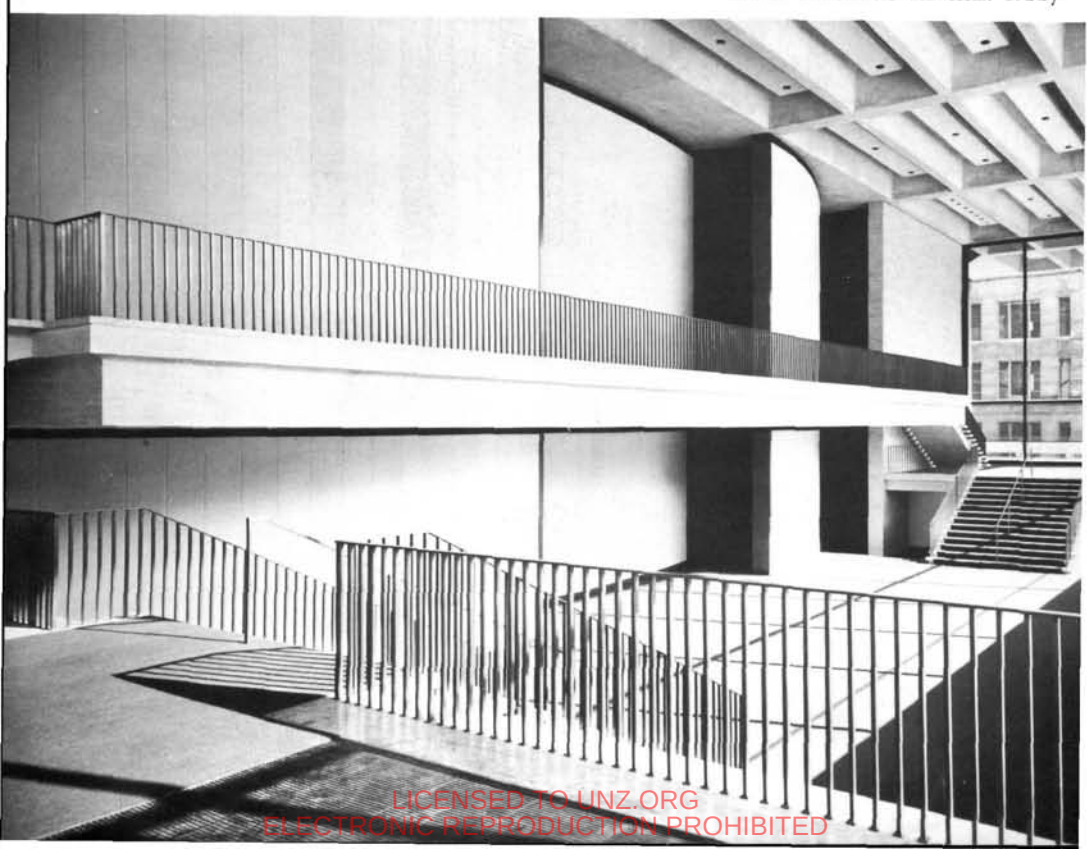


VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATRE

VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATRE: lobby



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NEW YORK STATE THEATRE

NEW YORK STATE THEATRE: auditorium

*Photo credits: © Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. In order of appearance: Bob Serating; Bob Serating; Bob Serating; Joseph Costa; David Hirsch; Ezra Stoller Associates; Guy Gillette; Ezra Stoller Associates.*

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

# Lincoln Center

THE DIFFICULTY WITH WRITING ABOUT LINCOLN CENTER is that it is not a disaster. One longs to take refuge in the comforting generalizations—comforting because by the turn of a *mot* they allow one to escape further thought about the matter and confrontation with the reality—about the Rockefeller's Edifice Complex, about Lincoln Center being what America produces instead of culture, and about the Chowder and Marching Society aspect of the presentation of the arts in this country. The truth is that the group of structures that now exists between 62nd and 66th Streets and Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues raises the most difficult and complex problems of the relationship of buildings to their environment and the suitability of architectural form to function, and that whatever reservations one may have about the architecture and planning of Lincoln Center must be severely mitigated by consideration of how the fabric of the Center allows its activities to be carried on.[1]

Some of the gravest mistakes at Lincoln Center were made in the overall planning stages, for which a committee of the architects involved was responsible. Faced with a site composed of rectangular New York City blocks in the midst of a slum area and fronting on one of the most elaborate and visually irregular configurations in the city, the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Broadway, the decision was taken to construct a sort of Campidoglio of monumental structures symmetrically surrounding a grand plaza. Since none of the architects involved was Michelangelo, this not only established at the outset the academic, unadventurous quality of the entire project, but insured a scheme that would focus the Center inward upon itself, isolating it from the surrounding neighborhood. In the realization of Lincoln Center this isolation is exaggerated by the westward slope of the land, which means that although the buildings are almost at ground level on Columbus Avenue, they are raised on a high podium at Amsterdam Avenue. It is further exaggerated by the axial, front-back quality of the individual buildings, which quite pronouncedly present their backsides to the surrounding streets. The alternative to this solution, given the sculptural possibilities of modernist architecture and the lack of façades and axiality in its buildings, would have been an entirely free plan that surrendered conventional formal monumentality for the more real considerations of the nature of the site and the rela-

[1] In the preparation of this article I have become indebted to many people associated with Lincoln Center at various stages in its development, and particularly to the staffs of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and its constituent theatres, who were uniformly generous with time and explanation.

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tionships of buildings to one another and to their twentieth-century urban surroundings. Such a plan would inevitably have been totally irregular and uncoventional, but it would also have been a new and exciting statement of the possibilities of an urban environment. Furthermore, a less Beaux Arts conception could have made the unpredictability and irregularity of the surrounding structures seem welcome as different but interesting additions to a total environment.

Because the Lincoln Center plan is academically formal, every aspect of it which was beyond the control of the architects seems unrelated to the whole. The two most obvious examples of this inflexibility are the secondary cross-axis parallel to Columbus Avenue, and the open front end of the plaza. The secondary axis runs to the west of the New York State Theatre and Philharmonic Hall and in front of the Metropolitan Opera House. At its north end it terminates satisfactorily in the as yet unfinished Juilliard School of Music, which is part of the Lincoln Center complex. At the south, however, where the adjacent property was not under the control of the Lincoln Center architects and they could not return the space upon itself, the axis ends ignominiously in a thoroughly insignificant building belonging to Fordham University. A less rigid plan might have demanded less of the Fordham building and made it seem more comfortable to be where it is. The open front end of the plaza has somewhat the same problem, in this case reminding one of St. Peter's square. Because it must remain open to the city, as the incompleteness of Bernini's colonnade forced St. Peter's to remain open to medieval Rome, one stands in the plaza surrounded by marble monumentality and looks out at uncontrolled city growth thinking how unfortunate it was that the architect couldn't have done something about that, too. The unofficial proposal for a mall to Central Park is one recognition of this situation—how nice if that could all be swept away in an extension of the Center's Baroque formality. But how much nicer if the original planners had taken cognizance of the identity of the city as it exists and tried to create within that framework.

The other greatest planning misfortune was the specification of travertine as Lincoln Center's uniform revertment. Although it has suitably imperial connotations and normally weathers to a lovely color, it is a deeply pitted material which provides pockets for the collection of New York soot. Already the buildings of Lincoln Center are dotted with black, and in many places rain has streaked their walls. The end effect will be shoddiness not grandeur, and a more easily cleaned light material or the black stone of the Whitney Museum or the CBS building would have been a more practical solution.

Faced only with these facts it would not be difficult to declare the master planning at Lincoln Center an act of incompetence. Reality has it otherwise, however. At night Lincoln Center is an enchanting hive of activity, a thoroughly enjoyable prelude to an evening of en-

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tertainment by any of the arts housed there. The movement of people through the plaza and behind the glass building façades makes a delightful and exciting environment. The fact that much of the light comes from inside makes the buildings inviting to enter, and the change in noise level from the "hard" sounds of the fountain and the surrounding streets to the hush of the lobbies begins the process of progressive control of external stimuli that culminates in a performance. In the summer there are outdoor cafes and informal performances in the plaza which encourage strolling and lingering, and, whatever its esthetic failings, the total ambience of Lincoln Center is one that makes it a pleasure to be there.

The Metropolitan Opera House, designed by Wallace Harrison, is architecturally the least successful building at Lincoln Center. The largest building in the complex, it is the smallest scaled, and its timid façade arches and tentative lateral verticals cannot disguise the fact that it is basically an overblown shoebox giving no external recognition to the variety of functions inside, or to their basic division into three groups. The exterior is merely fussy, particularly in such details as the mullions of the façade windows (which also make it impossible for the huge Chagalls to register at full strength across the plaza), and the interior is swathed in elegant chichi. The chichi ranges from the arty metalwork of the lobby entrance gate and bronzed handrails to the apparently gold plated Ezio Pinzo Memorial Drinking Fountains *("Finch'han dal acqua, calda la testa"?)* and the gilded metalwork surrounding the proscenium, repainted recently to suppress its brightness, which looks like nothing so much as a nineteenth-century pressed tin ceiling. The one promising element architecturally is the plastic sweep of the entrance stairs, but this note of very real elegance is contradicted by the crudeness of the painted concrete of which the stairs are made and by Harrison's inability to cope with the structurally necessary vertical piers in any complimentary way.

Again, however, it is necessary to measure what has been achieved architecturally against how well necessary functions are housed as well as against what might be possible in the best of all possible worlds. Opera is essentially a nineteenth-century art and demands a nineteenth-century theatrical setting—stage and auditorium vis-a-vis, an orchestra pit separating the two, a loft for scenery, and sufficient public space. This, combined with the demands made by the various technical and working functions to be housed, imposes severe restraints on the architect, and the great opera houses of the world have been either triumphs of taste and interior decoration (Garnier's Paris Opera) or triumphs of technique (the Bayreuth Festspielhaus). The single example of an opera house that may well be an architectural masterpiece, Utzon's Sydney Opera House, will almost certainly be an operational and financial catastrophe. Given these facts, it may be well that Harrison has essentially copied the old Met, complete with red

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plush, gilt, and glittering atmosphere. The new house provides, for the audience, excellent acoustics and sight lines, comfortable seats, and adequate public spaces for intermission drinking and strolling. For those who work there it provides unparalled technical facilities and at least adequate work space in every department. If it never finds its way into histories of architecture, it is at least a delightful place in which to hear opera.

Philip Johnson's New York State Theatre is in many ways simply the Opera House raised several notches on the scale of architectural quality, but not enough to make it a really important building. It has the same chichi elegance, combined with a certain restraint and simplicity, but is infinitely more pretentious in a bloated, school-of-Mussolini way. The entrance lobby is lined with granite, which gives it a cold, ungracious atmosphere, and is lit with a great number of small projecting ceiling fixtures, conflicting in their minuscule repetitiousness with the overblown boldness of the rest of the space. The auditorium is much more cavernous in feeling than any other at Lincoln Center, and the vertiginous height of the upper balconies makes them seem vastly remote from the stage. The house apparently functions well for ballet, for which it was intended, and reasonably so far opera, but not at all well for drama. With a continental seating plan and laternal exit doors, Johnson has provided a more efficient flow of human traffic than is the case in any of the other theatres. There is ample public space in the huge promenade, which is indeed one of the more impressive public spaces in New York, although the intermediate corridors between the auditorium and the promenade give the impression that they might be easily overcrowded. Because of the catwalks that surround it on all sides the Promenade itself looks a little like a cell block in a very posh prison. It would benefit immensely from having the walks on the front, and possibly those on the sides, removed. This would not only relieve the prison effect, but would clear the present visual obstruction of the plaza, a full view of which is very pleasant during intermissions. One of the pleasantest features of the theatre, as of each of the three major buildings at Lincoln Center, is the outdoor terrace connecting directly with the Promenade. Johnson has designed the most interesting exterior of the three by introducing an alternating bay system. The smaller bays frame exterior lighting and the larger bays mark the points of entrance to the building and subway areas. This pleasing differentiation of function unfortunately dies at the sides and back, where the walls of the building are brought flush with the supports, creating an extremely thin effect. As with the Opera House, the New York State Theatre makes no attempt whatever to express internal space on the exterior, and in a maddening mannerism typical of Johnson a bronze strip runs between the columns and the architrave, making a complete visual break between the two and denying their structural relationship.

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Max Abramovitz' Philharmonic Hall has both the best and the worst ideas to be found in the three major halls. To differentiate the basement and auditorium levels, Abramovitz has tapered his columns upward to the roof and downward to the ground from the auditorium level, which gives the exterior an extremely graceful appearance. That appearance is enhanced by the fact that Philharmonic Hall is entirely surrounded with glass, presenting an inviting aspect all around as well as allowing one to see that the auditorium is set well within the building and surrounded entirely with public promenades. Failing concrete architectural expression of this feature of all the theatres (the total containment of the auditorium), this is certainly the most direct way of handling it. Abramovitz has difficulty only with the rear of his building, where operational requirements dictated the blanking out of many of the windows, and a more satisfactory solution than the use of glass would have helped. The major problems with Philharmonic Hall are in the interior. These are no longer acoustical—the acoustics now having been dealt with satisfactorily—but revolve largely around a tackiness of finish which betrays both bad planning—the use of too much painted plaster, for instance—and insufficient attention to detail and insistence on careful execution. This shows up not only in the obvious wearing of certain finishes and surfaces, but in such places as the use of a synthetic tile for the aisle floors (apparently a concession to the acousticians) and in the black-painted wooden floor under the removable orchestra seats at the front. This same pedestrian quality carries through to the use of escalators to bring people from the entrance lobby to the promenade. Despite the fact that these speed circulation somewhat, they look absurd in a formal setting, particularly from the outside. But the worst interior feature of Philharmonic Hall is the ground-level entrance. Having entered the building, one finds oneself in a combined restaurant-gift shop from which there is no apparent access to the auditorium. Not only is the effect extremely sleazy, but the lack of clear indication of direction is an inexcusable architectural fault. Once in, the auditorium itself is warm and pleasant and the general effect extremely handsome.

Abramovitz has failed in relation to an ideal solution much more than the other architects, no doubt largely because of the exigencies of the program. Because his building type, a symphony hall, allows much greater planning flexibility and because of the relatively few types of activities that take place there, the exterior volumes could have been made to express much more directly the interior spaces. Furthermore, a greater variety of seating, as well as of relationships between orchestra and audience, was possible. There is, for instance, the Albert Hall solution of audience seating surrounding the orchestra. This plan was adopted for the new Berlin Philharmonic hall, which also has the seating broken up to make a more intimate setting. A more conservative contemporary solution is that of the Saarinens, father and son, at Klein-

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hans Music Hall in Buffalo, probably the most successful modern orchestra hall in the country. It consists of two handsomely detailed parabolic halls back to back, one for orchestra concerts and one for chamber music recitals. Abramovitz chose nothing so adventurous, however, and the result is an adequate auditorium but one that, like the other two major buildings at Lincoln Center, falls far short of what it might have been.

Far and away the finest building at Lincoln Center, and a really superb structure it is, is Saarinen's Vivian Beaumont Theatre. On the exterior it is a bold, simple, direct statement, with clearly defined areas for the stage house, auditorium, and lobby. There is no doubt about how to get into it and no doubt about where to go once one is in, and the spatial and light sequence from outside to glass-enclosed lobby, to dark corridor, to the theatre itself, is masterful. The two houses, designed in conjunction with Jo Mielziner, are flexible and inviting, their only limitations being a certain tightness in the balcony seating. The detailing throughout is first-rate. The railings in the lobby, for instance, are basically the same as those in the Metropolitan Opera lobby, but without the surface texture. This slight change makes all the difference between a clean, elegant effect and a fussy, affected one. Saarinen has also used raw concrete, travertine, and a cloth that looks like silk side by side in a superb combination of textures. Because each is carefully finished and placed in well-thought-out relation to the others the effect is one of straightforward contemporary sophistication that could have served as a model for the other buildings. If one has any criticism whatever it is that applicable to many Saarinen buildings, that the architect thought out his theatre in terms of structure and spaces, and details such as lobby lighting and fenestration seem to have found their places afterward by being fitted into the finished scheme. These are not obstrusive problems, and at least Saarinen has erred on the creative side of things. He has brought off that of which he was the ultimate master in twentieth-century American architecture, the near-perfect adaptation of form to function. If the entire Center had been devised by Saarinen, and the plan laid out by him instead of by a committee, New York would have a contemporary monument without peer.

Apart from the Juilliard School of Music, which is still largely unfinished, there are two subsidiary structures at Lincoln Center. One, the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts is partly incorporated into the Beaumont Theatre and partly sandwiched between it and the Opera House in an uncomfortable accomodation that does justice to nothing. Inside, it is a delightful and wholly successful series of exhibition and study areas. The other, the bandshell to the south of the Opera House, is a neo-Islamic fantasy in painted concrete best left undescribed.

A contemporary setting for the performing arts, like a contemporary

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museum, is one of the most difficult projects for an architect to undertake. Like a museum, the more successful it is as architecture, the more that esthetic success is likely to obtrude on the functions the building is designed to serve. This is not so much an argument for mediocre architecture in such projects as a recognition of the fact, first, that only an architect of the character of Saarinen could be expected to bring them off successfully, and second, that if something must be sacrificed it is better that the esthetic quality of the architecture go than the suitability of the building to its function. If such a project has commodity, firmness, and delight, it is a long way toward being a successful solution. It is just these three characteristics that Lincoln Center has tried to provide. In most cases it has succeeded in doing so, and it may be too much to cavil at the fact that the delight comes more from the flow of functions within the buildings than from the esthetic quality of the architecture. Certainly the whole is vastly more than the sum of the parts, and attending a performance in Lincoln Center, or even being there when it is heavily populated, is an extremely pleasant experience.

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***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

MICHAEL PAUL NOVAK* and BÉLA KIRÁLYFALVI* teach at Saint Mary College, Xavier, Kansas. Mr. Novak has published his own poetry in a number of literary magazines. Mr. Királyfalvi, a Hungarian, fled his country after the 1956 uprising. Attila József (1905-1937) is considered one of the greatest modern Hungarian poets, whose work combines the symbolist tradition with a fiery concern for social justice.

HENRIKAS NAGYS* is a Lithuanian poet now living in Montreal, where he works as a commercial artist. He has published four books of poetry, articles on literature and art, and translations from various languages. ROBERT and ALDONA PAGE* live in Philadelphia; Mrs. Page's native language is Lithuanian.

ADOLF HOFMANN* teaches German and English at Santa Rosa Jr. College, California.

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN is in the English Department at Smith College.

ROGER SALE's book, *Reading Spenser,* will be published by Random House this Spring.

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HERBERT LEIBOWITZ's *Hart Crane: An Introduction to the Poetry* will be published by Columbia University Press this Spring.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON's next contribution to this *Review* will be a group of translations from Octavio Paz.

*Asterisk indicates a new contributor.*

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JOHN SIMON

# Theatre Chronicle

TOM STOPPARD'S *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,* the hit presumptive of the season, may well be hoist with its own Stoppard. For the idea of the play is a conception of genius, which requires genius to develop it, whereas, in the event, it gets only cleverness and charm. The play turns the action of *Hamlet* inside out like a glove, and makes the story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern its subject, with Shakespeare's main characters wandering in at appropriate moments to speak snatches of the Bard's lines as a sort of background music.

R and G are seen as typical bystanders sucked into a great event, playing their bit parts in it almost unaware of what they are doing —which is, in fact, mostly waiting around—and ending up crushed by the wheels of mighty circumstances, that is, the action of *Hamlet.* Stoppard has his twin homunculi—no one, not even they, can remember which of them is which—mostly playing games: flipping coins, bantering with the strolling players on their way to Elsinore, and, above all, wallowing in word games with each other. These range from silly party pastimes played with alarming earnestness, to grand speculations on the last causes bandied about as if they were least—or lost—causes. It is a kind of fancy vaudeville that becomes coextensive with the fellows' lives. They feel impotent to assert themselves sufficiently to change the course of events; tired of it all, they knowingly walk into the lethal trap Hamlet has set for them.

The play, through which can be seen squeezing large chunks of Beckett, Pinter, and Pirandello, like sliding bulges on a python as he digests rabbits swallowed whole, is concerned with free will versus predestination and illusion versus reality, the two pairs of antinomies that have paid off best in the theatre. The first pair is represented by the plot of *Hamlet,* which here stands for fatality—Hamlet, Ophelia, Polonius, R and G, and the rest die in the ordained way at the time appointed by destiny or dramaturgy; and by the feeble attempts at selfhood embodied in R and G's twitchings and wisecracks, which stand for free will. Illusion and reality are brought on by the itinerant actors, a mute prophetic chorus foretelling the events to come in dumb show and commented on by the Player, the chorus leader, who is full of sardonic epigrams on the greater reality of staged death than real death, and on the precariousness and wispiness of the debased reality we live in. He and his tragedians enact R and G's fate before it happens—for life merely comes to imitate art—by way of an objective correlative that neatly ties in a bundle both pairs of antinomies. In this enactment, illusion is seen as illumination of which reality is only the shadow, while the volun-

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tary play-acting invites the inevitable acting out of the tragedy in the greater *theatrum mundi.*

The shortcomings of the play are three inconsistencies and one consistency. First, language. To go from Shakespeare's blank verse to Stoppard's ultracontemporary idiom and back again is—to adapt Frost's famous trope—like playing tennis with two balls simultaneously: if you miss one, you score with the other; if you miss both, the mere fact that two balls were in motion at the same time is enough to dazzle the laity. Secondly, character. Shakespeare's R and G (as Robert Brustein has pointed out) are calculating opportunists; Stoppard's, though their actions are still those of their prototypes, poor fish innocently hooked by higher villainy. But this fails to convince: two such pikers, congenitally incapable of action, could scarcely do what they are made to do here; if they could, however, they could no longer pass for such innocents. Thirdly, roles. R and G are derived from Beckett's Estragon and Vladimir; but whereas Beckett's characters maintain their identities as the simple soul and the intellectual, Stoppard's get confused. Though R is basically the clown and G the cogitator, they tend to overlap and blur. Now this contradiction, like the previous one, can be defended as the very paradox of existence; but where characters are used as counters in the first place, there had better be less self-contradicting. R is sometimes far too smart for the rest of him, and G has a way of dropping inordinately below his intellectual level. In life, this may be possible; in a highly stylized play, it looks like irresponsibility. In fact, it *is* irresponsibility.

But however one might defend these inconsistencies, the basic consistency is indefensible. For three acts R and G indulge in interminable word play, some of which is amusing and linguistically stimulating, but the total of which is cloying. Consider this sample page (printed vertically rather than continuously it constitutes a page): "G: I think I have it. A man talking sense to himself is no madder than a man talking nonsense not to himself.—R: Or just as mad.—G: Or just as mad.—R: And he does both.—G: So there you are.—R: Stark raving sane. *Pause.* PLAYER: Why?—G: Ah. (*To* R) Why?—Exactly.—G: Exactly what?—R: Exactly why.—G: Exactly why *what*?—R: What?—G: *Why*?—R: Why what, exactly?—G: Why is he mad?!—R: *I* don't know!" Stoppard can keep this sort of thing up indefinitely—or, at any rate, for three acts, and it proves a fatal consistency.

Derek Goldby has directed the production with intelligence and energy, and Desmond Heeley has designed it with the proper grandeur gone to seed. Brian Murray's R is the ideal jolly bumpkin, and John Wood's G is duly academic and forensic, although somewhat too manneredly elocutionary. Paul Hecht's Player will do in a pinch, but Noel Craig's Hamlet and Pat McAneny's Ophelia are scandalously inept and serious detriments to maintaining the proportions of the concept. Yet the principal lapse is Stoppard's: though he has written a literate and, for the first half, entertaining play, he has reduced a stroke of genius to a tour de force.

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# Reviews

ROGER SALE

## Good Servants and Bad Masters[1]

STYLE IS A FORM OF TYRANNY, or so says the narrator of Witold Gombrowicz' *Ferdydurke*. Gombrowicz himself has a rather quirky style, but it is not that but his obsession with his Idea that tyrannizes his novels. A middle-aged Pole whose works were long banned in Warsaw and whose life has been spent mostly in exile, he has recently been "discovered," given prizes, and called Europe's greatest unknown writer. Grove Press, obedient to the winds of fashion, has promised to publish his complete works, of which two, *Ferdydurke* (1937) and *Pornografia* (ca. 1960) are now at hand. Both are inexplicably titled, both are the work of a careful and immensely serious writer, both are enervating to read and distressing to write about. Here is Gombrowicz' tyrant, his Idea:

> Existentialism tries to re-establish value, while for me the "undervalue," the "insufficiency," the "under-development," are closer to man than any value. I believe the formula "Man wants to be God" expresses very well the nostalgia of existentialism, while I set up another immeasurable formula against it: "Man wants to be young."

In *Ferdydurke* a man of thirty suddenly finds he is fifteen-years old, the fit result of his love of the insufficient and the immature. In *Pornografia* two older men find the fulfillment of their vision of two youngsters in a murder committed by all four.

As an idea Gombrowicz' is certainly a lot better than many, but of course good servants make terrible masters and these novels collapse as the idea takes over. For "Man wants to be young" not only dictates the shape of the action, but the perceptions of the characters as well:

1 FERDYDURKE and PORNOGRAFIA, by *Witold Gombrowicz*. Grove Press. $5.00 each, END OF THE GAME, by *Julio Cortázar*. Pantheon. $5.95. THE PUZZLE-HEADED GIRL, by *Christina Stead*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $6.95. DEATH KIT, by *Susan Sontag*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.75. IMAGINARY FRIENDS, by *Alison Lurie*. Coward-McCann. $4.95. ALL THE LITTLE LIVE THINGS, by *Wallace Stegner*. Viking. $5.75. WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?, by *Norman Mailer*. Putnam. $4.95. GOG, by *Andrew Sinclair*. Macmillan. $6.95. A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS, by *Julian Mitchell*. McGraw-Hill. $4.95. THE PYRAMID, by *William Golding*. Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.50. THE REVOLUTIONARY, by *Hans Koningsberger*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $4.95. THE TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE, by *B. Traven*. Hill and Wang. $6.50. TATTOO THE WICKED CROSS, by *Floyd Salas*. Grove. $5.95. THE MANOR, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.95.

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> But she put her blouse aside and leaned her arm on the table, and this arm, in full view, correct, modest, even scholarly, belonging to Mama and Papa—was at the same time bare, completely naked, yes, naked not with the nudity of an arm but of a knee peeping out from under a dress . . . of a leg . . . and, with this shameless and scholarly arm she needled him, teased him, in an "idiotically youthful" way . . . but at the same time in a brutal way.

There is no arm here at all, but an idea insisting not only that the character sees in this bizarre fashion but that we do too. No arm, no girl, no independence from the claustrophobic will of the novelist.

Julio Cortázar is only a few years younger than Gombrowicz, but unless I have missed a good deal, his vice is distinctly newer. In *Ferdydurke,* when the man of thirty "becomes" an adolescent we lose no bearings because the idea has been clearly enough defined that the shift is only enacted metaphor. But in the stories in Cortázar's *End of the Game* such narrative switches and similar suspensions of space, time, and identity just happen. In one tale a man has an embarrassing habit of vomiting rabbits; in another a man becomes the murder victim in the detective story he is reading; in a third a man meets a transmogrified self. It happens in "our world," but it "didn't" or "couldn't." The way to describe these stories is the way the jacket copy does, by describing their gimmicks. The trouble is that after you've read the copy, you've really read the book.

Narrative transformations occur also at key moments in two other recent works, and if they are used somewhat less mechanically they still do not quite open up great vistas for future novelists. The four novellas in Christina Stead's *The Puzzleheaded Girl,* as a matter of fact, tend to work at the level of slick women's fiction. Their tone is confidential: we will be told the mysteries of the heart. In "The Rightangled House" the house really is the central character, I'm afraid, and, what's worse, we're not even allowed to know this until well into the tale. First we're all involved with the Laban Davies family, concerned about Laban's drinking problem. They go off somewhere and the Parsons move in; soon Mrs. Parsons is having intimate relations with the house. The local genie explains the house's past and so Mrs. Parsons doesn't matter any more and soon some people named Imber are crucial. But the arbitrariness is not just a matter of plot, for moment-to-moment we are subject to the likes of this: "It was three years later that he heard of her death in winter, in a half-covered doorway, up three steps, of a loft building not far from Union Square. And he too disappeared. Perhaps he died." After those second and third sentences, every detail in the first is irrelevant. Because they are, "he" is too, and so is his "death." All are victims of caprice, art coyly calling attention to itself.

Susan Sontag may not be as good as Christina Stead, but she certainly tries harder. The opening situation in *Death Kit* is straight

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out of Cortázar: Diddy Harron steps off a train that has stopped in a tunnel, he kills a man working on the tracks, he returns to make love to a blind girl and to discover the girl's insistence that he never left the train at all. Then we quickly see we have been set up for an impossibly long series of meanderings, most of which are right out of the idea-kit of these days: McLuhan and Poirier on visionary possession; some Lawrence on murderers and murderees mixed with Hannah Arendt on the banality of violence; the French on the curse and obsession of uncertainty. Miss Sontag is no novelist in the old-fashioned sense, but then she is not trying to write an old-fashioned novel. This is perhaps what is most admirable about *Death Kit:* its frigidity, its extraordinary (and fatal) belief in itself, its lack of the usual densities of fiction, its comfortable use of allegory, as in this from near the end:

> Diddy has ventured again into the intricate crowded space. Finding miniature pathways for his naked body between the heaped-up coffins when possible; more agile climbing over the coffins when necessary. Diddy's score: only one near fall, plus a scrape on his right knee.

Diddy has insisted on a replay of the opening scene, and so he goes back to the tunnel with the blind girl, kills the worker again, again makes love, then wanders into the allegorical world of coffins where . . . but that's the rub. Where death is the fulfillment of life, where hour by hour we rot and rot, where everything in Freud and all the other old masters whom Miss Sontag wants so clearly to move beyond is still true.

There *is* a new novel to be written, and though I'm pretty sure Susan Sontag is not going to write it, *Death Kit* does focus issues implicit in all the fiction discussed above, and if these novels fail the issues are not therefore unimportant. For almost everyone in the advance guard, perceivable space, time, and causation no longer hold as they once did. The mythographers show this, the pornographers show it, and so do those tyrannized by ideas. Unfortunately, suspension of perceivable space and time is much more an idea than an experienced fact—else the fiction would not be so bad. But out of the cliches of Gothic fiction came *Wuthering Heights* and *Bleak House,* out of the dreary bildungsroman came *The Rainbow.* The worst in any genre is as apt to appear at the beginning of its career as at the end. At the moment the efforts described above still seem to be as much in the backwash of experimentalism as groping towards something really new, but that too might be expected. The fiction chronicler has no business trying to predict, but still . . . something is afoot.

Because its tracks lead only into the fens, we return to the here-and-now. Temperamentally Alison Lurie seems similar to Miss Sontag, but when she starts describing some people who have been receiving

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messages from the "planet" Varna, she keeps her cool, works out her ironies, remembers who and when we are. Varna provides these Seekers with some imaginary friends and this, in turn, gives Miss Lurie a lovely way of talking about all our imaginary friends, especially those in the social sciences. Two sociologists want to use the Seekers as an experiment and so join the group, stay detached, and give non-directed answers. But the young hero wants the leading Seeker, and the old hero eventually becomes the voice of Varna on earth, "goes mad," and ends up in a mental hospital—where he immediately makes plans to use the inmates as material for a new experiment. It's all neat as a whistle. But Miss Lurie, though victim to neither Idea nor Style, cannot make her characters any more interesting than those in *Death Kit* or Christina Stead. The Seekers are only a metaphor, but they occupy far too much of the novel to be successfully that, while the sociologists are right out of the dustbin of academic fiction. *Imaginary Friends* is the first book in this bunch which is fun to read, but a lot of the pages have to be turned pretty fast.

Wallace Stegner's *All the Little Live Things* is more old-fashioned still, especially in the way it tries to be up to date. A middle-aged man retires to the Bay Area and finds there a young hippie who takes over his back lot and a young woman dying of cancer who lives next door. All the antagonisms of youth and age found currently in *Harper's* and the *Berkeley Barb,* all the pathetic efforts of the old to imagine that because they understand they know what to do, all the pathetic efforts of the young to imagine that because they know what to do they also understand, are here brought under the influence of the lush landscape and the young woman, who believes that all the little live things should grow as they will. What is winning about Stegner is his willingness to make his aged hero so unattractive even as Stegner unflinchingly takes his side. But the rest is journalistic stuff being pondered by a thoughtful liberal, and the hero's wife easily wins the race for the title of the most unreal character of the season.

Norman Mailer is different from this, and also better. But not much of either. Listen to Mailer and he'll tell you that no one makes the American idiom move and liberate as well as he. We need not argue whether that confidence is misplaced in principle for *Why Are We in Vietnam?* has plenty wrong in plain fact. There is, first, the intellectual pitch: as we read about some Texans bear hunting in Alaska, we learn why we are in Vietnam. Mailer's politics, thus, are rather like those of *Doctor Strangelove* in their really simple notion that what's wrong is that we have let people from out west run the country. You can tell them by their accents, and if Mailer's teen-age narrator doesn't call them "preverts," he's got all the other names:

. . . no, what made Big Luke The Man was that he was like the

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> President of General Motors or General Electric, pick one, I don't give a fuck, he had like the *bottom,* man, I mean D.J.'s here to tell you that if you were even a high-grade asshole and had naught but a smidgeon of flunky in you it would still start—you may purchase this in full confidence—in Big Luke's presence to blow sulfur water, steam, and specks of hopeless diarrhetic matter in your runny little gut, cause he was a *man!*

Don't go away yet. Of course D.J. and his father fall out after D.J. does the dirty part of killing a grizzly and Daddy claims the credit. But that is only the end of the fun part, the *Strangelove* part—and the sections on the guns and the rules of hunting by helicopter *are* good. But "the climax within Alaska is yet to come—you will get rocks off you thought were buried forever." D.J. and his friend Tex—not his father, as one reviewer claimed—go off and find nature and each other. Another reviewer would have it that the result is purification, but this is what he is thinking about:

> . . . there was a chance to get in and steal the iron from Texas' ass and put in his own and he was hard as a hammer at the thought and ready to give off sparks and Tex was ready to fight him to death, yeah, now it was there, murder between them under all friendship, for God was a beast, not a man, and God said, "Go out and kill—fulfill my will, go and kill," and they hung there each of them on the knife of the divide in all conflict of lust to own the other yet in fear of being killed by the other . . .

Because the dream of mastery is the dream of submission, because knowing this uncovers the murder under all friendship, they go—and we go—to Vietnam. No more Natty and Chingachgook, no more Huck and Jim; it's all pure white and pure terror. We cannot bugger and so we beggar our neighbors.

As an idea it is best described as marginal. But it is less an idea than the latest style of the lad who wanted to be sent to the Pacific because the great war novel would be written about it. *Why Are We in Vietnam?* participates in every American myth about America; every gesture asks that it become a staple in our textbooks because it fits in most of our more obvious conceptions of ourselves. That's not all that's wrong with it, but it is enough.

Equally and often similarly defective, but much more worth your time is Andrew Sinclair's *Gog.* Sinclair's material is all resolutely English—Druids, Albion, countryside, but most of his manner is all-American: big, sprawling, *Henderson, V.,* a hero seven-feet tall washed onto the Scottish coast after V-E day, an amnesia victim. He starts walking to London, and meets: a pleasant spoken women who kicks him, shuts a car door on his fingers, and turns out to be his wife; Maurice, who steals goats from fields to sell on the black market and on top of whom Gog falls when a hole in the ground turns out to be

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an entrance to an underground arsenal; the Bagman, who must get on the radio and so embody the spirit that was last incarnated in William Blake. Gog, meeting Magog everywhere. He seeks, to be sure, himself—but also home and the England he believes once was. The temper is Luddite, the style a sort of modern Carlyle:

> The noise gathers and departs along the rails over the arches, keeping to the lines of its coming and going, the iron lines that divide England even more decisively than the stone lines of the Roman roads, separating the people from their land by a skein of metal and machines that shuttle from station to station the factory goods and the labour force . . . until the roots of the villagers are pulped by pistons and the desire of humans for the fruits of the soil is baled in crates . . . and the patrols of the iron monsters along their beats make the people expect their regular passing so that they are missed when they do not come, as though the engines were now the guardians of prosperity rather than the seasons, as though the engines were not the sentinels on the perimeter of the concentration camp that condemns England to toil in the sweat of smoke and grime and din and slum, to sell what she does not need to make in order that she may consume what she does not need to have.

One would have thought that "human" as a noun had gotten no nearer Greenwich than the fringes of the Commonwealth, but all the rest is traditional English radicalism finding its form in an Americanized novel.

A strange mix, surely, and as the above indicates, Sinclair is not short-winded. Gog meets Magog over and over: in battle, debate, sex, pub brawl, church orgy, lunch with brother. The middle of the book sprawls badly. But Sinclair means to control it all. When Gog gets to London his wife tells him the whole trip has only been a dream of the amnesiac Gog. Which may or may not be true, but it helps convince Gog that the search for identity by means of the search for national heritage is partly an escape from identity:

> He does not want Liberty, but to be free. He does not want Equality, but to say sir to no one. He does not want Fraternity, but to have some brothers. A man's ribs are his own castle.

So too "Magog, why he's a man, he bleeds like any other, he must be saved like each victim." It is very curious that after scenarios of Harold at Hastings and long recovered manuscripts from druid days Sinclair should bring Gog down to this. But very English as well. Radicalism has always been a paradox of isolationism and missionary zeal, and its adherents *and* enemies are Nosey Parkers. *Gog* is much too long, but the end is rich and satisfying, a book the likes of which I have not seen in a long time.

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Next, some books the likes of which everyone has read: Julian Mitchell's *A Circle of Friends,* William Golding's *The Pyramid,* Hans Koningsberger's *The Revolutionary,* B. Traven's *The Treasure of Sierra Madre.* The first two of these properly belong in the class of good light fiction. Mitchell is a clever writer and so his book is always readable, but almost ten years after *Imaginary Toys* he should be doing more than rewinding the old tapes about fashionable parties in New York and weekends at English country houses. Golding's book is notable primarily because, coming from a writer hitherto best best known for his pretentiousness, it is so modest and mild. Except for the title and a brief final section, it is only two longish stories of an ordinary boy doing ordinary things told in the manner of a Marquand flashback. Koningsberger's book is more disappointing, because he has been a very good writer, able to cast lovely elegiac tones over standard subjects. Here the middle-class boy plunges into revolutionary politics, then dabbles with the middle-class girl, then seeks to shy away from Action. It is all recognizably Koningsberger, but it really is just a scenario waiting for a director to turn it into a good European movie. *The Treasure of Sierra Madre,* despite the brouhaha over its author, must be for most of us the movie that got made into a book. It has more inset stories than Huston's version, most of which are put in to amplify the tale into a critique of capitalistic imperialism. The proper praise of the tale is that it can bear such weight, and the Mexican peasantry are much better here than in Huston. But it has no Bogart, and no Walter Huston, and certainly on the basis of this novel alone it is not clear why anyone would want to go farther than across town to trace down B. Traven.

Floyd Salas might not be a man one would want to meet, but *Tattoo the Wicked Cross* is certainly a book many will want to read; it is about a reform school, an inside story that is cursed only by an extraordinarily intense need to get it said right. Salas is so completely inside that he makes no gesture at all towards giving us the scoop or making the insider's knowledge into lore. So much of the material is familiar—the homosexual brutality, the tenacity with which the codes of honor are kept, the erosion of self as the world outside becomes unreal—that it is hard to know how to show Salas' moving authenticity. He stands at one with his fifteen-year-old hero, he sees only what the boy sees, yet he can glorify him and still indicate the madness of replacing self with code in the face of implacable and triumphant enemies. The chief antagonist is an older, black inmate who rapes the hero's friend and, in the climatic scene, the hero himself. He is called every filthy racial name there is, yet one way of indicating the book's tone is to add that there is not even a hint of something as subject to easy generalization as prejudice. So too with the homosexuality, about which all we need to know is that rape hurts and humiliates. It is a brutal book, and so absorbed, so intense,

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that it is hard to imagine Salas having any other tale to tell. *Tattoo the Wicked Cross* is one of those rare books written not because its author wanted to write but because in the face of his experience he had no other choice.

Isaac Bashevis Singer's *The Manor* is more than ten years old. It is only the first volume of a projected two, and, long as it is, I still do not know where it is going but its own way. No matter, though, for it is a classic, the sort of book in which you know from the beginning nothing can really go wrong. Singer has shown a streak of exoticism in writing about the Poland of three and four centuries ago, and he had often been merely cute in his short stories about any period. But here, in the Poland of his father's youth, he has an historical period he can understand and create, and in so doing he seems to have turned his impishness into inventiveness and his capacity to know it all into a vision so dense and so compassionate that nothing needs to be "known" or explained because it is all just there, before us, the way it was.

To tell the story is to make it sound more like *The Family Moskat* than it is, for although if it has a central character it is Calman Jacoby, who leases the estate of a decayed Polish count and becomes immensely wealthy, and if it has a focus it is Calman's family, in fact to give it a focus or a central character is to thin it out, make it less like Breughel than it is. Everything is placed in front of us—each son, each daughter, each friend and relation and their friends and relations—without perspective, without any means of "understanding" except the actions and feelings of the he or she in the foreground at the moment. The motions of history are there, to be sure, and after a while some patterns emerge: the many tugs on the Jews as they begin to become assimilated Poles, the tugs on the Poles as they face the Jews, the Russians who are their masters and the western Europeans who tend to be their idols. But Singer says none of this except in the process of explaining why someone went to Warsaw or married a Gentile or became a doctor or returned to the ghetto for a holiday. For example:

> ". . . I'm no longer a Jew, I've been baptized. But blood is thicker than water and I can't stand seeing the Jews suffer. How can anyone move into someone else's home, live there in total isolation, and expect not to suffer by it? When you despise your host's god as a tin image, shun his wine as forbidden, condemn his daughter as unclean, aren't you asking to be treated as an unwelcome outsider?"

That is, perhaps, an idea, but it is not treated here either as a debatable proposition or as a truth. Instead, it is the utterance of a character who turns out to be of no importance, except it is said to Ezriel who becomes Calman's son-in-law and a doctor, the light and

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the curse of his wife, the lover of . . . and the protégé of . . . and so it goes. The book does not register its ideas as such, nor does it scorn them as dramatic intuitions and props. They are, the speech is, it all is, and is woven into this mammoth cloth the designs of which only begin to become clear. Never was there a sense of history and a fictional technique that demanded more in mere inventiveness of its author, and seldom has that challenge been so fully and so effortlessly met.

Singer has been compared to Tolstoi before this, and, given the masterfulness of *The Manor,* the comparison will be made again. But next to Singer here Tolstoi is a veritable fusser, kin to some novelist of ideas, a writer cursed with attitudes. Of course the point must be turned around, too, so that it can be said that Singer is shallow indeed as a creator of character when compared with the author of *Anna Karenina.* There are barely scenes in *The Manor,* or moments of resonance; Singer's imagination is a market-place, people and their feelings are so thoroughly in motion that they cannot do anything to alter the serenity with which Singer registers the motion. That must stand as a limitation, but given the extraordinary virtues of which it is a defect, given Singer's freedom from both bondage and the need to master, anything can be conceded because everything is still possible.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN

# Styron's Unwritten Novel

THE REVOLT OF VIRGINIA SLAVES led by Nat Turner in 1831 is more than an analogue of contemporary events; it is itself a contemporary event in the sense that it is directly connected with matters that are affecting all our lives. But in discussing William Styron's novel about Nat Turner,[1] I should like to concentrate on the work as art, not analogy.

Styron is interested in tragedy. Other gifted contemporary Americans have centered on other matters: sensibility, psychology, black (and blue) humor, myth. Styron has not excluded any of these—he could not, by the very nature of his material and times—but his previous big novels, *Lie Down in Darkness* and *Set This House on Fire,* use all these elements to a predominant tragic purpose. Cyril Connolly's familiar dictum—that it is the business of the writer to create masterpieces—has been Styron's law, and to him masterpiece has meant tragedy. He is the only writer of his generation who has consistently swung for the fences and has been willing to take the attendant risks. The results vary; I think his latest novel is his poorest; but his large-souled subscription to the highest aim commands something more than cool respect.

The difficulties of writing tragedy in our time have been well chewed over. Styron knows what they are and has faced some of them, with greater success in his first novel than in his second. (Although I think the latter underrated. Finally it fails, but there is some grandeur on the way to the failure.) All these years, however, Styron has had stored away in his mind what he evidently considered a tragic instance made by history, free of the constrictions of modern life yet applicable to it. The story of Nat Turner's revolt has been part of Styron's consciousness since his Virginia boyhood, and he has ostensibly thought of it as a tragic armature waiting to be picked up (when he felt he was ready) and fleshed.

But the questions begin at once. *Is* Nat's story a tragedy? Or merely a cruel historical eruption? If it is a tragedy, what kind of tragedy is it? And this depends on the character of Nat himself, his quality and stature. In an article and an interview, Styron has compared him with Luther, Robespierre, Danton, and Castro. This seems to me bloated and false. Those men were members of society who objected to aspects of it, had plans to change it and to live in it—if not govern it—after it was changed. Nat was not a bona fide member of the society he had reason to hate, had no plans whatsoever for altering it, and simply wanted to get out of it after he had destroyed as much of it as he

[1] THE CONFESSIONS OF NAT TURNER, by *William Styron.* Random House. $6.95.

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could reach. As a revolutionary hero for a work of art—quite apart from his behavior in history—he simply does not exist. He hates what he sees (and other slaves were much worse treated than he was); he strikes back (and gets very little help from other slaves in doing so). He is a historical symptom—of the increase in the sense of individual worth in the Western world. Unlike *Danton's Death,* Nat Turner's death is no kind of political-revolutionary tragedy at all.

It is in quite another way that this novel has a chance for tragic stature—as a drama between man and God. Intellectually, Styron is aware of this. He has said (*New York Times,* Oct. 8, 1967), apparently unconcerned that he is contradicting his comparison of Nat with revolutionists:

> One must remember that [Nat] is a religious fanatic. And the book . . . is a sort of religious parable and a story of exculpation . . . It should be apparent that the book expresses the idea of Old Testament savagery and revenge redeemed by New Testament charity and brotherhood.

He is thus his own best critic; because what he says should be apparent is *nowhere* apparent. The opposition of the two theologies is never made; the redemption is never effected. On the very last page, in the next-to-last *line,* a quick little verbal Band-Aid is laid on the great gaping wounds of the story; that is as close as the book comes to the idea of redemption in Christ. All through the book this drama was possible. Styron does not posit it, either directly or implicitly. He *does* state the premises of another, equally large, apposite religious drama, but he merely states them; then he walks away from them and leaves them unfulfilled.

Nat, whose evangelical quality is made plain from the start, is in prison at the opening, captured after his bloody revolt. His lawyer, Gray, asks him:

> "Don't you realize . . . that it was the message contained in Holy Scripture that was the cause, the *prime mover,* of this entire miserable catastrophe? Don't you see the plain ordinary *evil* of your dad-burned Bible?"

The atheist lawyer goes on to recount (of course from the viewpoint of a man who wants the status quo preserved) the horrors that Nat's religious fervor has wrought or been responsible for. Nat, confronted with this hard contradiction, admits that he has never considered it. *He never does consider it.* Styron has shown us how Nat's speech, his thoughts, his very fantasy derive from both the contents and the language of the Bible. The book bears as its opening talisman the Alpha and Omega of the altar. ("It's de prime sanctua'y, de alpha and de omega, where all mysteries are revealed," says Ella near the end of *Lie Down in Darkness.*) The book closes with verses from the last chapter of Revelation. We see Nat throughout as the conscious

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agent of God. He makes his major moves only on what he takes to be divine command. Therefore the question that Gray asks him—and which Gray repeats in differing form—is absolutely central to the book.[2]

Nat never answers, in word or thought. At the end of that first section in jail, he beseeches God:

> *Then what I done was wrong, Lord?* I said. *And if what I done was wrong, is there no redemption?*

(The sudden lapse into bad grammar, after the rhetoric of most of Nat's thoughts, is a patent plea on Styron's part for dialect-pathos.) The question is not answered. On the next page we go into the long "flashback" that is the bulk of the book, which narrates the events—internal and external—that lead to Nat's execution. A short coda takes place in the prison cell where Nat thinks:

> I will go without Him, I think, I will go without Him because He has abandoned me without any last sign at all. Was what I done wrong in His sight? [A reprise.] And if what I done was wrong is there no redemption?

In the morning the jailer says, "Come." Nat thinks that he would do it all over again, would destroy them all over again, except one: the only person he himself killed—the white girl who, he suddenly tells us, showed him God. Then the jailer's voice, in Nat's mind, becomes God's voice, saying, "Come, My son."

Now this ending is, first of all, a fabrication; God had been a presence in Nat's life long before he met the girl. But, worse, this film-soundtrack insertion of God's voice a split-second before fadeout confronts neither the lawyer's question nor Nat's own question about redemption. And these are the *absolutely fundamental* questions of the book. Styron poses them, and then—though he drenches the book in scriptural rhetoric—simply skitters away from them.

In short, the central defect of the book is that Styron has written a novel about a religious agonist without fulfilling—in any way he might have chosen—the religious agony. There can be no satisfaction in the story of Nat, the God-driven rebel, unless we are *convinced* that his destruction brings him closer to God—or else plunges him into courageous cosmic loneliness. Styron has said that Camus' *The Stranger* gave him the clue he needed on how to approach this book. This is true only in the most superficial formal sense (the hero in

[2] Herbert Aptheker, the Marxist historian of slave revolts, discussing Styron's novel from the historical view (*The Nation*, Oct. 16, 1967), brings out an important fact: "Perhaps the most dramatic moment in the actual *Confessions* [the record dictated by Nat] comes when Turner's court-appointed interrogator demands to know from him whether or not he sees now—in jail and in chains—that he was mistaken in what he had undertaken, especially since he is soon to be executed. The interrogator himself reports Turner's reply: 'Was not Christ crucified?' This direct, simple and great flash is not in the novel."

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prison, reflecting as he awaits execution). Camus' form is the outcome of a thoroughly understood, fully articulated philosophical-theological position. Obviously one does not prescribe that position, or any position, for Styron. But some view of the theological questions—in realized dramatic terms, not divinity-school statements—was necessary to fulfill his book. The real story of Nat Turner is, as Styron has said, a religious parable: one of redemption in Christ. More, as Aptheker tells us, the real Turner believed in himself as a Christ-actor. Styron has left the story unfinished.

For this story he substitutes—and he does even this somewhat halfheartedly—a psychosexual drama seen by modern eyes. Styron, in his extrinsic remarks about the book, has made much of the sexual sublimation of revolutionary leaders (although to link Luther and Danton in this regard seems rather odd). He has quite evidently decided to throw this element into the mixture, hoping (one feels) that if the revolutionary or religious drama does not sustain his book, the modern reader can always cling to the psychosexual cable to carry him across. He tells us of Nat's adolescent discovery of sexual potency, of watching his mother being ravished by a white overseer, of a bit of unintended sex play with another Negro youth, of Nat's deliberate repression of sexual activity as part of his dedication (he never sleeps with a girl). The friendly white girl becomes a complicated image for him, not only of purity and loveliness but of "whiteness" and hatefulness, all bound together and intensified by her obvious liking of him and his sexual desire for her. He, of course, kills her in the revolt. She is the only person he kills. Styron has reasoned his drama backward from this fact. An artist has every right to reason backward or forward as he likes, to imagine motives and patterns from given facts; all he has to do is make them true and meaningful. Here they are merely pat. The psychosexual study of Nat is, as such, a series of clichés, and the killing of the girl would be foreseeable even if we did not know about it beforehand. Moreover, the scene in which he kills the girl is so stagily carpentered in every movement and word that we are conscious only of the novelist. It is utterly unmoving.

The only unpredictable element in it is retroactive. At the very end, as noted, we learn that it was this girl, if not the *killing* of this girl, "that showed me Him whose presence I had not fathomed or maybe never even known."

Between religious ecstasy and sexual ecstasy there is, we know, no rigid line, but the novel does not try to show us that they are partly or wholly identical. They are simply both *there,* the former inconclusive, the latter unenlightening.

Part of Styron's effort to activate the book sexually and to bring it spang into the modern consciousness is his use of obscenity, mostly in the mouths of Nat's fellow-slaves. It is immediately suspect. How does Styron know what obscenity *was* among slaves? In a milieu in

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which every nail and plateful of food seems to have been vetted for accuracy, the obscenity stands out as questionable. It is a difficult diction to determine in most periods because it is not often set down, and here we are dealing with a non-literate social group. For example, a crazed and starved slave execrates a white man: "You is a sona-bitchin' cuntlappin' fuckah!" Immediately we want to know how Styron knows that a Virginia slave in the 1820's would have used those words. It is not a matter of pedantry but of ear. The basic words are ancient, but many of the combinations sound contemporary; and this, plus the fact that Styron uses obscenity at all, seems an attempt to galvanize the book, to jab history up-to-date with electric needles.

Which brings us to the exactly opposite subject—the period prose. First, there is the (much discussed) language of Nat's thoughts. Styron has chosen to write the book entirely from Nat's viewpoint and has based the language on the pamphlet from which he also took his novel's title, *The Confessions of Nat Turner,* an account set down by Nat's lawyer, Gray, with (says Gray) "little or no variation from his own words." Styron believes this last, evidently, and there is no way to gainsay him; but this belief makes for a continual contrast between Nat's inner monologue and most of his speech. Styron is aware of this, naturally, and is implicitly asking for an act of imagination on the reader's part, something that has been asked by thousands of novelists and which is a convention that often works to everyone's advantage. But there are numerous passages where Styron asks too much of a concession from us, where he strains credibility very badly—particularly when (because everything is inside Nat's head) he asks Nat not only to be Nat but to do the work of the *novelist.*

> Now again my mind begins to wander. My thoughts stray outdoors once more where the brilliant fuss of chattering birds intrudes in the fading day—blackbirds and robins, finches and squawking jays, and somewhere far off above the bottomlands the noise of some mean assembly of crows, then calls echoing venturesome and conniving and harsh. Again the scene outside captures my attention, so now slowly and with irresistible pleasure I turn to gaze at the coarse green slope with its slant of golden light and its nimble bustle of many wings. . . .

The greatest novelist who ever lived would have trouble convincing us that "brilliant fuss" and "mean assembly" and "nimble bustle" came from the mind of an ill-educated slave. Rotundities derived from King James, yes; but those phrases are literary conceits, they smell of *authorship.* In much of this book, especially in the padded passages of novelistic process—landscapes, transitions, and so on—Styron elbows Turner aside and takes over.

Much of the dialogue sounds false, too. It is hard to believe that the most fustian of Victorians could have uttered this sentence spontaneously:

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> "For several years there has come to my attention wondrous bruit of a remarkable slave, owned at different times by various masters here in the vicinity of Cross Keys, who had so surpassed the paltry condition into which he had been cast by destiny that—*mirabile dictu*—he could swiftly read, if called upon to demonstrate, from a difficult and abstract work in natural philosophy, and in a fair hand inscribe page after page of random dictation, and had mastered his numbers so far as a comprehension of simple algebra, and had so attained an understanding of Holy Scripture that such of those few adepts in the science of divinity as had examined his knowledge of the Bible came away shaking their heads in wonder at the splendor of his erudition."

This is a transparent imitation of many books read. We all know that some fine novelists—even a few great ones, like Hardy—wrote poor dialogue; but Hardy, to use him as an example, was not writing at the end of a century of realism and naturalism, after hundreds of novelists had brought dialogue closer to the vernacular and after their readers had derived new standards of credibility from them.

All these various kinds of dubious language contribute to a signal failure in Styron's novel: none of the characters comes fully to life. Nat comes nearest, for the obvious reason that most space is devoted to him. At least we get from him a set of fairly vivid characteristics, but they never coalesce into a human being who would be recognizable off the page (surely a test in this matter). Because of this lack, Nat's progress to his outburst is more a matter of Styron's bricks and mortar than a cumulation of passion. As for the major minor characters, all of them represent ideas, few of them have vitality, let alone completeness. Especially is this true of the sympathetic white girl, whose every line and movement are rank cliché. Among the minor minor characters, like two pederasts, there are occasional glints of color because that is all that is needed for them: glints of color.

Much of the acclaim that has been given this novel seems to me a recognition of the fact that Styron has chosen a large subject, a historical instance of terrible immediacy, and has addressed it with that hunger for size that has motivated his entire career. But the reach for the past seems to have impeded his customary grasp of truth: in character, prose, and—fundamentally—theme. The sexual theme is glib and reductive; Nat had glands, but so has everyone, and unless the sexual theme could have been made so overwhelmingly powerful that it encompassed everything else (which it does not), it was bound to seem almost an easy contemporary "out," instead of facing squarely the major classic agony. Nat's drama, quintessentially, is a soul's pilgrimage to a clearer perception that God is or is not; or else it is merely the bursting of one abscess in a large poisoned body. Styron had ambitions toward the former; in falling short, he has not even given us all the reality of the latter.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

# The Great Lover

CASANOVA'S DAZZLED READERS SEARCH for comparisons as if for antidotes. Surely he isn't such a nonpareil, surely there are other books like his.[1] Montaigne too was curious about everything on earth and skeptical about everything beyond it. Stendhal too was a brilliant and discriminating psychologist who dedicated himself to the subject of women, courtship, and love. Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart's librettist and Casanova's friend (whom Casanova, providentially, assisted with the libretto of *Don Giovanni*), was another talented and energetic Italian adventurer who left us a record of his adventures. Benvenuto Cellini had ego and audacity to match Casanova's, as well as the luck to have been born a Renaissance Italian.

But they are all planets to Casanova's sun. Cellini is hobbled by the responsibility of his reputation as a genius, he justifies, he apologizes; he isn't free—as the private and disreputable Casanova is—to be witty even at the expense of duty, responsibility, ambition, those first infirmities of public minds: "If anyone calls me a sensualist," remarks Casanova genially, "he will be wrong, for the power of my senses never drew me from my duty when I had one." Da Ponte's memoirs are patchy and disappointing, he has forgotten much (including everything interesting about the two unique personages he knew well, Casanova and Mozart) and he recollects with an old man's dim querulousness: he could not, for instance, have paid his respects, as Casanova does at seventy-two, to

> Happy youth! I do not regret it, for it was always giving me something new; for the same reason I loathe my old age, in which I find nothing new except what I read in the gazette . . . .

Stendhal's irony has often the effect of depreciating the enthusiasms it is meant to invoke and define; Stendhal could not have affirmed his life, as Casanova does, by recalling without finickiness the very skin and smell of its pleasures:

> I have always liked highly seasoned dishes: macaroni prepared by a good Neapolitan cook, *olla podrida,* good sticky salt cod from Newfoundland, high game at the very edge, and cheeses whose perfection is reached when the little creatures which inhabit them become visible. As for women, I have always found that the one I was in love with smelled good, and the more copious her sweat the sweeter I found it.

[1] HISTORY OF MY LIFE, by *Giacomo Casanova.* First translated into English in accordance with the original French manuscript by Willard R. Trask. Harcourt, Brace & World. Vols. I and II, $7.50. Vols. III and IV, $7.50. (The translation will be complete in twelve volumes.)

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> What a depraved taste! How disgraceful to admit it and not blush for it! This sort of criticism makes me laugh. It is precisely by virtue of my coarse tastes, I have the temerity to believe, that I am happier than other men, since I am convinced that my tastes make me capable of more pleasure. Happy they who know how to obtain pleasure without harming anyone; they are madmen who imagine that the Great Being can enjoy the griefs, the sufferings, the abstinences which they offer him in sacrifice, and that he loves none but fanatics who inflict them on themselves. God can demand of his creatures only that they practice the virtues whose seed he has sown in their souls, and he has given us nothing which is not meant to make us happy: self-esteem, desire for praise, emulation, vigor, courage, and a power which no tyranny can take from us: the power to kill ourselves if, after calculating, be it rightly or wrongly, we are unfortunate enough to find it our best recourse

Even Montaigne, by the light of Casanova, comes to seem a dilettante and philosophizer, he digests experience without having tasted it; he is too cautious or abstract to leave the field to persons and passions; he doesn't blaze up continually, as Casanova does, with the living images of a versatile and unrepudiated past:

> The object of my desires arrived at midnight. Dismayed to see that it took great agility on her part to climb up on the new bale, I lift my plank, set it aside, and, lying down, offer her the whole length of my arm; she takes hold of it, climbs, and, straightening up, is astonished to find that she is in my balcony down to her waist. She brought the whole length of her bare arms into it without any difficulty. We wasted only three or four minutes congratulating each other on having independently worked for the same end. If on the previous night I had been more her master than she had been mine, on this night she commanded my entire body. Alas! stretch my arms as I would, I could not possess more than half of hers. I was in despair; but she, though she had me entirely in her hands, was ready to weep because she could satisfy only her mouth. She heaped a thousand Greek curses on the wretch who had not made the bale at least half a foot bigger. Even then we should not have been satisfied; but my hand could have soothed her ardor somewhat. Though our pleasures were sterile, they occupied us till dawn. She departed without making a sound; I put back the plank, and went to bed in great need of regaining my strength.
>
> . . . The next night . . . was the last night. . . . Surrendering to her senses, no longer able to resist the fire which was burning her soul, the charming Greek told me to stand up, bend over, take her under the armpits, and pull her up onto the balcony. What lover could resist such an invitation? Naked as a gladiator, I stand up, I bend over, I take her under the armpits and, without needing the

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strength of Milo of Crotona, I was pulling her up when I felt my shoulders grasped and heard the guard's voice saying, "What are you doing?" I let go, she flees, and I fall on my stomach. I have no wish to get up, and I let the guard shake me. He thought the effort I had made had killed me, but I was worse than dead. I did not get up, because I wanted to strangle him. Finally I went to bed without addressing a word to him, and even without putting back the plank.

For Casanova has his failures, and he describes them as candidly as his successes. "I think you are very amusing," says a lady he has importuned; "I advise you to calm yourself." At the foot of a staircase he learns "a lesson in physiology" from the daughter of a washerwoman:

> . . . I sprang on her and, partly by persuasion, partly by swift action, I subjugated her on the last steps; but at the first thrust of our union a most extraordinary sound, proceeding from the place next to the one I was occupying, stayed my fury for a moment, and the more so because I saw the victim put her hand over her face to hide the shame she felt at her indiscretion.
>
> I reassure her by a kiss and make to continue, but lo! a second sound, louder than the first; I proceed, and now comes the third, then the fourth, and so regularly that it was like the bass of an orchestra giving the time for a piece of music. This aural phenomenon, together with the embarrassment and confusion which I saw in my victim, suddenly took possession of my soul; all together they presented so comical an idea to my mind that, laughter having overpowered all my faculties, I had to let go. . . .

There are, of course, the accidents of war, which he accepts—especially in the retrospect of his ungrudging old age—with suitable gallantry: "It was the seventh infection, and I got rid of it, as always, by dieting for six weeks. I have never done anything in my life except try to make myself ill when I had my health and try to make myself well when I had lost it. I have been equally and thoroughly successful in both, and today in that particular I enjoy perfect health, which I wish I could ruin again; but age prevents me."

He is usually, though, the great lover; not the great seducer (like the demonic imaginary nobleman whose story he helped his friend da Ponte to write), but the humane and generous lover, admirer, idolater, husband, companion, poet and painter, servant and teacher of every woman he loves: "Alas for those," he exclaims, and proves his sincerity over and over again, "who think that the pleasure of Venus is worth anything unless it comes from two hearts which love each other and which are in perfect concord!" A French Casanovist—who else?—has counted one hundred and twenty-two women to whom Casanova makes love in the pages of his *Life*, from 1735 (when he was ten!) to

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1774 (when the *Life* abruptly breaks off).[2] Among these encounters most no doubt are casual ones (as with the Greek slave girl or the washerwoman's daughter); but many of them are intense and involving, recollected with passionate vivacity and a fullness of detail that challenges the greatest fiction (not to mention anybody else's memoirs).

Casanova is no Platonist of love, he has no general idea of women. He loves the hot-blooded lady Donna Lucrezia and her haughty sister; the credulous, pathetic Duchess of Chartres; the downright country girl in pursuit of a husband, Cristina; the trusting and affectionate sisters Nanetta and Marta ("This love, which was my first, taught me almost nothing about the way of the world, for it was perfectly happy, unbroken by trouble of any kind, and untarnished by any interested motives"); the freethinking nun, M. M., who is his most adorable and most proficient pupil:

> About the first hour of the night I went to the temple of my love and, waiting for my idol to arrive, I amused myself by looking at the books which made up a small library in the boudoir. They were few but choice. They included all that the wisest philosophers have written against religion and all that the most voluptuous pens have written on the subject which is the sole aim of love. Seductive books, whose incendiary style drives the reader to seek the reality, which alone can quench the fire he feels running through his veins. Besides the books there were folios containing only lascivious engravings. Their great merit lay in the beauty of the drawing far more than in the lubricity of the poses. I saw engravings for the *Portier des Chartreux*, made in England, and others for Meursius, or Aloisia Sigea Toletana, than which I had never seen anything finer. In addition the small pictures which decorated the room were so well painted that the figures seemed to be alive. An hour went by in an instant.
>
> The appearance of M. M. in her nun's habit wrung a cry from me. I told her, springing to embrace her, that she could not have come in better time to prevent a schoolboy masturbation to which all that I had seen during the past hour would have driven me.
>
> "But in that saintly dress you surprise me. Let me adore you here and now, my angel."
>
> "I will put on secular clothes at once. It will take me only a quarter of an hour. I do not like myself in these woolens."
>
> "No, no. You shall receive the homage of love dressed as you were when you brought it to birth."
>
> She answered only with a *Fiat voluntas tua* ("Thy will be done") delivered with the most devout expression as she let herself fall on

[2] Gérard Bauër, Préface to *Mémoires de Casanova* (Librairie Gallimard, 1958), Vol. I, p. xxxiv. M. Bauër points out that one hundred and twenty-two women over thirty-nine years averages out to only three a year.

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the commodious sofa, where I treated her with caution despite herself. After the act I helped her take off her habit and put on a plain robe of Pekin muslin which was the height of elegance. I then played the role of chambermaid while she dressed her hair and put on a nightcap.

Delighting as he always does in the rituals of domesticity, Casanova is at his most domestic with the gracious and subtle Henriette, with whom he shares the most idyllic episode in the *Life,* a marriage of true minds that concludes when she must leave him to return to her husband and family. So she writes him:

> "It is I, my only love, who had to forsake you. Do not add to your grief by thinking of mine. Let us imagine that we have had a pleasant dream, and let us not complain of our destiny, for never was an agreeable dream so long. Let us boast of having succeeded in being happy for three months on end; there are few mortals who can say as much. So let us never forget each other, and let us often recall our love to renew it in our souls, which, though parted, will enjoy it even more intensely. . . . I do not know who you are; but I know that no one in the world knows you better than I do. I will have no more lovers in all my life to come; but I hope that you will not think of doing likewise. I wish you to love again, and even to find another Henriette. Farewell."

Casanova recovers eventually, as Henriette bids him to and knows he will, as he does from all his setbacks. "Happy or unhappy, life is the only treasure which man possesses, and they who do not love it do not deserve it." His fidelity to life persists through everything, it not only saves Henriette's letter but treasures her wonderful story of the Abbess who objected to her playing the 'cello because one "could not hold the instrument except by assuming an indecent posture." But grief is real too, and Casanova remembers what it too was like:

> It stupefies; it does not make its victim want to kill himself for it stops thought; but it does not leave him the slightest ability to do anything toward living. I found myself in a like state six years later —but not on account of love—when I was put under the Leads [the State Inquisitors' prison in Venice], and again twenty years later, in 1786 at Madrid, when I was imprisoned at Buen Retiro.

Six years later, locked away by the State Inquisitors for over a year in a cell too low to stand up in, furnacelike under the leaden roof, he is given pious books to read, one a Spanish nun's Life of Mary, which leads him to speculate on the precariousness of sanity:

> A reader with a mind more susceptible to the miraculous and fonder of it than mine is in danger, when he reads it, of becoming a visionary and a maniacal scribbler like the virgin herself. The need

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> to occupy myself with something led me to spend a week over this masterpiece of hyperexalted invention; I said nothing about it to the stupid jailer; but I could bear no more. As soon as I fell asleep I was aware of the plague with which Sister d'Agreda had infected my mind, weakened by melancholy and bad food. My extravagant dreams made me laugh when I recalled them in my waking hours, for I wanted to write them down, and if I had had writing materials I should perhaps have produced a work up there even madder than the one Signor Cavalli had sent me. From that time on I saw how mistaken they are who attribute a certain strength to the human mind; its strength is only relative, and a man who studied himself thoroughly would find nothing in himself but weakness. I saw that though men do not often go mad, it is nevertheless true that the thing is easy. Our reason is like gunpowder, which, though very easy to ignite, nevertheless never catches fire unless fire is applied to it; or like a drinking glass, which never breaks unless it is broken. The Spanish woman's book is just what is needed to drive a man mad; but for the poison to take effect, he must be confined under the Leads alone and deprived of any other occupation.

The book does not, however, drive him mad, this intrepid and impenitent rationalist. Soon he is planning his escape (nobody has ever escaped from the Leads), and after months of labor is on the point of succeeding when he is moved to another cell; plans another escape that requires moment-by-moment collaboration with one prisoner and systematic mumbo-jumbo terrorizing of another, succeeds at last after every harrowing apprehension, and plunges off to freedom and the prospect of new adventures. We have reached the end of the fourth volume (and failed to note that Casanova is a gambler as compulsive as Dostoevsky, a Freemason, a cabalist, a magician; that, having in youth entered on a very promising career in the Church, he might with a little luck and prudence have become a Cardinal like M. M.'s other lover, or even Pope). In this handsome, authoritative edition there are eight volumes and scores of women yet to come, and eighteen more years of an unparalleled and exemplary life.

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WILLIAM DICKEY

# Intention and Accident

"JOHN MASEFIELD'S NAME WILL BE honoured and remembered wherever the English language is spoken." The comment is from the dust-jacket of *In Glad Thanksgiving*,[1] Masefield's posthumous and I suppose his last book of verse. The speaker is Queen Elizabeth II. She is speaking, of course, of the laureate of her whole reign—Masefield had in fact been laureate for more than twenty years at her accession. But the fact of the laureateship need not be the only question involved; the poems themselves have many qualities that might draw a queen (who is by virtue of her office both social and traditional) to commend them.

The qualities are most essentially those of permanence, singleness, harmony, and intention. Masefield was born in 1878, when Arnold, Tennyson and Browning had each a decade or more still to live, and he inherits from them assurances both of seriousness and of effective will. The poet's subjects and the poet's tone are for Masefield historically continuous; the poet learns the relationship between them in an apprenticeship ("Or ignorantly seeking how to write,/ Changing each chosen master for a worse") and what he has learned he exercises with a clear and untroubled intent:

> Musicians, painters, poets, men
> Who made the world more lovely then,
> The story-tellers beyond price,
> Bringing the news from Paradise,
> Men from whose handiwork we see
> Horizons in eternity.

The duty and ability of the artist is clear: it is a synthesizing ability, one in which the relationship between time and eternity is as important as the identity of either. It hopes to be outside the ephemeral, the local and temporary. In the best of this very late poetry of Masefield, I think it successfully is:

> That June, with all her flowers,
> The dog-rose in the hedge,
> The King cup in the sedge,
> The clover-cop most blest,
> That saw the partridge nest,
> Has passed, as all Junes must,
> For Change has many powers.
>
> But mortal men, who trust

[1] IN GLAD THANKSGIVING, *by John Masefield*. Macmillan. $3.95.

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That Effort brightens Dust,
May make the better best
And all the wonder ours.

This poetry, admitting as it does the possibility of a simultaneous presence of the actual and the ideal and of a harmonious relationship between them, and admitting as equally valid the claims of thought and sensation, is fundamentally not ironic. It thus provides an undivided point of departure for the more characteristic poetry of the twentieth century, which sees relationship in terms of its inharmonious possibilities, or which, increasingly, is reluctant to accept the idea of intentional relationship at all.

The extent of that reluctance is indicated by Ronald Gross's *Pop Poems*,[2] a book which is deliberately ephemeral, and which depends on an aesthetic of accident rather than on one of intention. Gross has described his context and his expectations at some length in the *New York Times Book Review:* "The line is fairly direct from Duchamp's bottle rack and urinal to Warhol's Brillo boxes, Jasper Johns's American flags, and Jim Dine's bathroom. Artists in other fields, like John Cage in music, have contributed their findings. The makers of 'happenings' insist that the best performances take place outside of theaters, with the dramatist simply announcing that what is happening *is* drama." As to form: "I soon found myself rediscovering all the traditional verse forms in found materials: ode, sonnet, epigram, haiku, free verse. Such finds made me realize that these forms are not mere artifices, but shapes that language naturally takes when carrying powerful thoughts or feelings."

This last statement is an interesting one in that it tries to establish for the poetry of accident an independent validity. But such poetry has in fact a secondary and dependent existence: Gross as an ironist is dependent upon Masefield as a synthesist. Here is one of Gross's "Five Haiku":

This is not the luggage ticket
(baggage check) described by
Article 4 of the Warsaw Convention.

And here is one of five epigrams:

The Iron Curtain isn't soundproof.
Give to the college of your choice.

Neither of these is an independent poem, nor has Gross found the form of either by some happy accident. The poems are lunar: they exist only by the reflection of the light of another body, of what we already know to be the intentional forms of haiku and epigram. Without that previous definition, what is presented here would convey no sense of form whatever.

[2] POP POEMS, by *Ronald Gross*. Simon and Schuster. $1.95.

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Everything Gross presents falls, then, under the definition of a determinist irony: an amused recognition of the distance between the idea and the thing. Gross resolves the distance in favor of the thing, and he argues, in effect, that things do indeed write poems. But as long as the irony governs, neither accident nor the recognition of significant accident will seem to have afforded him a justification of the *objet trouvé* as the foundation for an independent poem.

Gross, exercising the selection which he deprecates, is at least generally amusing. When the pattern of accident is accepted without much sense of proportion, or when an antithesis of sensation and idea is too uncritically embraced, the results are more disquieting. Accident as a principle does not distinguish between capable and incapable vehicles, and it provides no system of measurement by which proportion can be indicated. The application of an idea of accident may then result in something like Robert Grenier's *Dusk Road Games*,[3] a book which contains the following disclaimer from its editors: "All grammatical and typographical oddities in this volume are intended by the author." Such a statement may easily suggest a pretty plastic author, and I find nothing to refute the suggestion in the last poem of the book, "The Front Yard Has Its Loveliness Nonetheless":

> Most of the spaniel died in the night.
> To mull over the
> Sherbourne and Clay dispute . . .
> fat, as like poop
> the cleverer redemption came scudding
> it's right a violin should come to nought.
> You wish to
> scaffolding
> wax more appealing
> dismal picaresque
> Thereupon through the oaken door burst
> fended off the
> frightening, it certainly was frightening
> Why should cats huddle or be happy
> saraband, four martins
> homing to the place of the Dutch.

Where Gross was recognizable in terms of reference to previous forms, Grenier is not. In Gross the theory of accident is mitigated by the fact of formal imitation; in Grenier discontinuity is allowed entirely to govern. But the discontinuity is still imperfect; instead of working entirely with sense perceptions, it too often exhibits a tropism toward literary language ("dismal picaresque"). The poem attempts to shake off its rhetorical inheritance, but it does not entirely succeed.

[3] DUSK ROAD GAMES, *by Robert Grenier.* Pym-Randall Press. $2.00.

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Since it does not, it is left not so much with a free world of accident as with a studied incoherence, which must by its definition defeat itself.

Grenier permits discontinuity, the formula of accident, to determine the shape of his poems. Paul Oppenheimer, in a very much more disingenuous book,[4] uses discontinuity as an escape from responsibility. Oppenheimer's *vita* provides the first clue: "He has worked as an ice-cream salesman, a printer's devil, and an editor in two book publishing companies. He is currently teaching English at Hunter College. For hobbies Mr. Oppenheimer cites pocket billiards and medieval history." Given this biography, we establish Oppenheimer as lesser camp; our assumption is reinforced by his own statement about the nature of his poems: "The battle is to rescue life from abstraction. We are before the battle because, whenever we win it, we discover that we've won it for a moment only and that the battle must be fought again." The statement is unintelligent. Whatever relations may exist between abstractions and life (assuming them to be different) they are not likely to be either as simplistic or as militant as Oppenheimer suggests. He is being what accident encourages him to be: an irresponsible spokesman. He is also an irresponsible poet:

EPIGRAPH FOR RODIN'S SCULPTURE

Chisel and hammer let fly at marble
Great curses of his brazen heart.
Somehow an outside world collapsed
When potent marble fell apart,
Loosening shapes from Plato's cave
To loom in sinewy art.

Such a poem has only an accidental coherence: that of its subject. The additional possibilities of coherence that might lie in a body of closely related and supportive image, or in an intelligent counterpoint of denotation and connotation, are lacking. The failure is finally a moral one, since Oppenheimer uses the possibility of discontinuity to conceal or excuse his hatred for his subjects (see, for example, "The Aged One").

One further indication of the effect the idea of accident can have: it can preclude that variation of dramatic effect which has been characteristic of poetry, by assuming all situations to be equally and in all of their parts dramatic. Donald Jones says of his poems:[5]

> Though my aim was the truth of poetry and though the names of the clients are changed, the facts given are strictly accurate and

[4] BEFORE A BATTLE AND OTHER POEMS, *by Paul Oppenheimer*. Harcourt, Brace and World. $4.50.

[5] MEDICAL AID AND OTHER POEMS, *by Donald Jones*. University of Nebraska Press. $1.50.

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should prove reliable and useful for political reform. Partly because these poems are virtually destitute of images to delight the eye, unique loved faces, and homelike places, I like to call them a pastoral of the impoverished in Megalopolis, a mummery of urban America.

The two intentions suggested here are probably incompatible: *either* the work is a case history *or* it is an urban pastoral. If it does not determine which direction it wishes to follow, it will be bound by the formal requirements of neither. A work that is governed by the fact, rather than by an aesthetic perception of the fact, is hard to judge *as a work:*

PROOF AND REPROOF

Stalwart old gentleman,
a member of grand juries,
you asked if I wanted an oath
from you and raised your hand.

Though embarrassed and overawed
I said it wouldn't do,
and you damn near swore and left
but could not afford such pride.

At the basis of this poem is a fact that may very well be interesting. But the poem, by accepting the *accident* of that fact as its intention, becomes less able to shape its material so as to require from us our strongest and most inclusive response. But if the quality of our *response* becomes accidental, we may soon be at odds as to what we see in the poem, or indeed as to whether we see a poem at all. One of the problems of found art, unless we are to suppose that all objects are of their own nature art objects, is how to decide whether it is in fact art that we have found. Jones's suggestions of "a pastoral of the impoverished in Megalopolis" beg the question; they retreat to a literary terminology which may or may not be relevant to the present fact.

The great problem of an art of accident and discontinuity is its determinism. If John Cage opens a piano at Tanglewood and permits the next ten minutes of incidental noises to be the "composition," he is not dealing with a very broad range of possibility. A Tanglewood audience is already orchestrated, in that it will make only those noises appropriate to a Tanglewood audience; so are the Berkshires orchestrated: they will continue to make the sounds appropriate to large hills. Once one stops considering noise merely as noise, it rapidly hardens into a rather unsympathetic particularity; accident as a *basis* has the paradoxical effect of discouraging the unexpected.

The unexpected, the other, the beyond—this is an aspect of experience accepted with ease by Masefield, and rejected by the

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deterministic tenets of found art. The concept continues to trouble the rest of us: Reed Whittemore indeed has one passage that begins "Dearest Other: I feel I should write." The efforts to deal with the other are mainly of three kinds. They may be like Whittemore's ironic, achieving a successful relationship of ironic perception and ironic tone. They may attempt to convey the quality of the other by an excitation of tone alone. Or they may try to find ways in which the actual and the ideal are still related for us in a positive fashion.

The last choice is the one made by Archibald MacLeish,[6] who has for years been involved in a difficult search for a myth which is relevant to our contemporaneity. *Herakles* is only one moment of that search, which may as easily be identified in *Conquistador* or in *The Fall of the City*. Does our existence have ritual and exemplary dimension in the way that the existance of Oedipus does? We *know* this relationship between the incident and the idea; MacLeish seeks the form through which we will be able to *feel* it.

I must say, reluctantly, that I do not think he finds the form, and that at the end of *Herakles* the languages of the myth and of the commonplace are still unrelated. The language of the play succeeds when it is *all* myth and excapes our immediate context, as in this crossing of Styx:

> then the smell of water
> stale the way a wet stone smells . . .
>
> dead men throng that unseen shore—
> words without breath—bat voices . . .
>
> then the skiff comes silent on the silent
> oar: you crowd the dead: cross over:
> fumble for footing in the shelving ooze:
> grab at eel-grass: stumble: flounder:
> listen . . .
> no sound at all, not even
> frogs to hear by . . .
> So you whisper . . .
> nothing.

But this passage, which seems to me successful because of its singleness and its sensuous immediacy, MacLeish considers bravura work; the stage direction that precedes it is *"Acting it out: enormous relish."* The more serious intention of the play is to reside in passages like this:

> Oh it wasn't God.
> He's dead now, isn't he?
> Odd he should be dead just
> now when his absence is everywhere.

[6] HERAKLES, *by Archibald MacLeish.* Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.

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The speaker of this passage has admittedly had too much champagne, but her effort to domesticate God is unfortunately MacLeish's effort too. He cannot decide whether to reduce the myth to the terms of colloquial language, or elevate our own experience into archetypal contexts,—so he does both. The result is a poem whose language is too various to be whole.

If *Herakles* does not present a solution, it has at least recognized the nature of the problem, rather than evading it. In the work of several other poets I feel that an evasion, intentional or unintentional, is being made, and that the language, the sensations, the relationships of an autistic world are to some degree substituted for those of the general world of value that MacLeish admits.

I feel this most strongly with respect to the work of Brother Antoninus, whose *The Rose of Solitude*[7] is a pretentious and dishonest book.

*The Rose of Solitude* concerns itself with the reverberations of a single event: the speaker of the poem, a religious, goes to bed with a pleasant woman who, thinking it over afterwards, declines to repeat the experience. Out of this germ, which might have been quieted by the confessional, come 125 pages of overheated verse, and a lengthy prose preface which may represent the fullest statement of a narcissist theology yet made in our time.

The book's faults lie in its disproportion and in its irresponsibility. Antoninus assumes an identity of microcosm and macrocosm: the human sufferer is not only a type of Christ, he *is* Christ. Moreover, the human sin is excused by suffering, since only when he is confronted by sin and suffering is God in a position to grant forgiveness. The concept of the *felix culpa* has seldom been more strained than here, or more psychologized; eventually the doctrine is perverted into a general congratulation to Antoninus for having been good enough to suffer so much.

The language of the book is, like its substance, overblown. Antoninus makes a simple equation between suffering and unintelligibility: the greater the pain, the more tortured the syntax. In pursuit of this relationship he arrives at distortions which can best be called grotesque. Part three of his book opens on this unusual note:

> Gags. Thrids.
> And in the third returning
> The arrested stupration.

The language is a compound of jargons and abstractions, words feeding on words because the poet will not give them any serious substance to feed on:

> Man's every act, hinged on the fractured disposition,
> jagged beneath the choice:

[7] THE ROSE OF SOLITUDE, *by Brother Antoninus*. Doubleday. $3.95.

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St. Peter's folly, cruxed on the fierce determining
complex, spawn of the grinning archetype feeding
denial.

Antoninus invariably employs a periphrasis for the actual event, since if the size of the event were once admitted, the size of the conclusions that could be drawn from it would be evident too. If the event is kept vague enough, and if the patterns of verbal violence and of identifications with Christ are repeated with enough whining persistence, we may eventually, if we are unsuspecting or very tired, come to consider Antoninus the profound nexus of flesh and spirit that he so publicly considers himself to be.

I have no similar sense of anger at the work of George MacBeth.[8] He is a responsible and effective poet. But his work presents another problem of the relation of poetic language to poetic substance or attitude. MacBeth's poems, like those of Empson, are provided with explanatory notes (and, for the first time in my experience, with an epigraph to the *notes*—an epigraph taken, appropriately enough, from Empson). The explanation of the notes is an interesting one: "The following notes are of two kinds—scenarios for the dream poems where they seemed excessively obscure, and metrical rules with prose lay-outs for the Chinese synopses."

The first of the two kinds is the one with which I am concerned, for it implies a distinction between poetic and prosaic language, and between poetic and prosaic experience. The distinction does indeed hold in the poems to which MacBeth refers—one will not necessarily, by reading the *poem,* arrive at a sense of the *scenario.* The poem is deliberately kept more ambiguous; it is at least initially relevant to a broader range of possibility than the scenario defines. In this too MacBeth is following Empson, whose own poetic practice does not assume that the occasion of the poem and the subject of the poem are regularly the same.

MacBeth seems to me to go a step farther, and to depend, to a greater extent than Empson does, on a contained symbolist structure. If the prose situation of the poem is relegated to a prose note, the *poem* is then permitted to deal with the situation in almost exclusively symbolic ways. Whether this is a desirable freedom for the poem is surely debatable, opening up, as it does, very central questions of the kind of meaning poetic language is intended to convey. I think MacBeth's work is certainly evocative, as in the following passage:

See, where the dying park
Erupts with light! With knives they strip her bare
And part her fleece
And lay her in the ground and make their way
Where no help comes. I sense thick light

[8] THE COLOUR OF BLOOD, *by George MacBeth.* Atheneum. $1.95.

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Swirl in the windows. The broad fin of day
Swims to the surface . . .

But to what extent would this passage have conveyed to me, singly and inevitably, any part of the poem's scenario:

An Indian boy looks out at night through a window in the house of a woman he admires. He believes that he is too impotent to elicit a response from her and identifies her indifference with the remote fire of a star that seems to move in the darkness. As day breaks, he begins to think of his own passion as like . . .

Freed as it is from fidelity to its occasion, the poem can then provide us with almost everything *except* a sense of how uniquely important that occasion was. The idea of accident is at least adumbrated as soon as the normal patterns of causation are set aside.

The relation of poetic language to poetic substance is of dismaying interest in W. S. Merwin's new book.[9] I began reading it with the antagonism I have generally felt for Merwin—a facile poet so persuaded of the virtue of his personality that he has often been willing to let a poem go by half-defined. My first experience of the book reinforced that opinion: if accident is fashionable, I should expect to find Merwin embracing accident, and I did:

It had been discovered that the bread was photographs of unidentified seas and not for everyone but it was all taken care of it was put in the banks with the dead

It had been discovered that the bitterness of certain rivers had no source but was caused by their looking for something through the darkness and finding . . .

So much for fashion. Beginning there, *The Lice* moves with disquieting force into failures, absences, vacancies, into a true reversal of Merwin's earlier assumption that poetic language is in fact able to determine experience. The book and its language grow increasingly empty:

THE DREAM AGAIN

I take the road that bears leaves in the mountains

I grow hard to see then I vanish entirely
On the peaks it is summer

Or, from "In the Winter of My Thirty-Eighth Year":

There is nothing wrong with my age now probably
It is how I have come to it
Like a thing I kept putting off as I did my youth

[9] THE LICE, *by W. S. Merwin.* Atheneum. $1.95.

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There is nothing the matter with speech
Just because it lent itself
To my uses

Of course there is nothing the matter with the stars
It is my emptiness among them
While they drift farther away in the invisible morning

Merwin's was one of the most forceful of the bestiaries that suddenly became popular in the early fifties. I remember his Leviathan poem from *Green With Beasts*—a violently active and effective work. The image is diminished now:

Gray whale
Now that we are sending you to The End
That great god
Tell him
That we who follow you invented forgiveness
And forgive nothing . . .

The rhetorical constructs that supposed they, rather than accident or fact, defined the world, have largely gone now, lessening even in the course of this one book. As they go, Merwin's work seems to become less enamelled, less a question of elaborate perspectives and distances, and much more vulnerably human.

I have tried to suggest in this review a polarity between intention and accident, and have considered various kinds of language as effective in the service of either of these two ends. This is very much an interim report: the shape of the poetry of the future is not yet very apparent. There are many assertions as to what poetry ought to be, but no Muse was ever brought to bed by an assertion.

Let me end the review, then, by contrasting the voices of two poets. Ron Loewinsohn accepts,[10] if not entirely a poetry of accident, at least a poetry which is determined by the observed fact, rather than inventing or determining it:

THE GREAT SAND DUNES (for Joey)

In the sand dunes we saw where
the water'd been seeping, &
digging thru the sand we saw a layer of
snow, white & compacted, 3 or 4 inches
of it, covering acres of sand dunes,
& covered in turn by the sand.

Later that night we heard the rain
on the roof, briefly, & looking
out the window, we could see the clouds
headed eastward, toward the mountains,
pushed by a wind out of the northwest.

[10] L'AUTRE, *by Ron Loewinsohn*. Black Sparrow Press. n.p.

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Loewinsohn's exact honesty to what he sees and hears is in the tradition of William Carlos Williams; it assumes no essential difference between a colloquial voice and a poetic voice, though it allows the second to be a sometimes heightened form of the first. It also assumes, I think, an equivalency between poetic experience and general sensory experience: the poem becomes a form of our general consciousness, rather than a specialized consciousness of its own.

A good deal is gained here. Loewinsohn, with his attentiveness to spoken language, will not over-ornament, nor of course will he be tempted by the kinds of inflation that come from Antoninus's confusion of the human and the divine.

But something is lost, and I think it is that sense of the other that Masefield so genuinely has. Loewinsohn's world is very alive and very clear in its *human* way—one cannot help admiring it and feeling affection for it. But Loewinsohn knows, as we all must, that sense of the other, of the transparent architectural shape and proportion which is reflected, clearly or unclearly, in the things we build. I don't yet see how he (or Robert Creeley, whom he admires) can deal with that architectonic. So far, their only effort has been by the implications of objects—the pattern of resonance of the haiku. Such a pattern may permit one to say or imply something about ideal presences, but it will not let what is said be very precise. Loewinsohn's language is over and over again true, accurate—accurate enough sometimes to be infuriating—but there is an area of ideal eloquence that is so far closed to him, yet which has a relevance to our lives.

I've left Whittemore[11] till the last because he seems to me to represent the most characteristic response of our time to Masefield's optimism: the response of scepticism, of irony. This response is a whole and balanced one: it takes account of the accuracies we can define as well as of the ideas we can only suggest. It is most strongly aware of the distance between the actual and the ideal, but by being seriously aware of both it opens perspectives that Loewinsohn's poetry won't yet admit. It is less doctrinaire and more variable: it accepts not only the tones of voice that are characteristic of us when we are being ourselves, but the tones we use when we want to escape from being ourselves: both a central language and the emotionally charged eccentricities of it. Whittemore is as exact as this:

> The bad daddy who has been angry with the whole family,
> one by one,
> Now retires to his study to be sullen and think of death.
> He has aches in his neck and stomach that he is afraid
> to see the doctor about.
> He has a sense of his mind's slopping off into fuzz.
> He feels that he is becoming allergic to cigarets . . .

[11] POEMS NEW AND SELECTED, *by Reed Whittemore.* University of Minnesota Press. $4.00.

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But against that world of fixed identity there is also a world of possibility. To Whittemore the possibility of the other is immediately available; he can stand as easily in a world of imagination as in a world of fact. So Whittemore, seeing himself as a god, creates man:

> I looked at him
> He was sitting out on the steps of the cabin in shorts.
> He had no mark on him.
> His body was firm. He was muscular. His hair was
> still black.
> Yet the eyes, and mouth, and flesh of the cheeks and
> forehead
> Were old. He looked out across ages, like a saurian.
>
> What had I made?

The possibility of where we might be seems as open to Whittemore as the possibility of where we are. The force of the imagination is vividly alive here; the connection is strongly maintained between the perceiving eye and the considering mind. Even when the relationship is ironic, the unity of thing and abstraction, the simultaneous presence of feeling and intellection, is asserted to the end:

> The guardians speak not at all. There is simply no evidence.
> The riots go on at the shores, but the suburbs are quiet.
> None but the aged seem panicked. At a West Coast college
> A metaphysician with tenure was heard to proclaim
> That the good was living nearby, under an assumed name.

HERBERT LEIBOWITZ

# Hart Crane's Orphic Songs

"The career of Hart Crane will be written by future critics as a chapter in the neo-symbolist movement," Allen Tate predicted many years ago in an essay that helped stereotype Crane's poetry for almost three decades. Tate did not choose to write that chapter, claiming that in the 1930's it was premature to assess Crane's achievement, yet by one of those instructive ironies that mark American literary history, he set the terms of subsequent critical dialogue: Crane, he said, was a magnificent failure. His magnificence consisted of a music of chivalric intensity and an epicureanism of spectacular moments. But against these occasional successes Tate set Crane's failures—

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emotional confusion, misguided idealism, and anarchic play with words. A narcissist who suffered from a "fundamental and original disorder of mind," a sort of sensation-mongerer in the speakeasies of his mind, Crane stood as the object lesson of the dangers of Romanticism. "His words had no center, and the thrust into sensation is responsible for the fragmentary quality of his most ambitious work. . . . This thrust took two directions—the blind assertion of will, and the blind desire for self-destruction."

Professor R. W. B. Lewis, in his informative study of Crane's career,[1] will have nothing to do with Tate's critical orthodoxies. For Lewis, Tate was voicing the neo-classical taste of modernism established by Pound, Eliot, Hulme, and others in the ideological campaigns of the twenties and reinforced by the New Criticism in the academy. Crane, himself an equivocal modernist, was a casualty of these anti-Romantic sentiments, and only now, when Romanticism has been returned to fashion, can we appreciate Crane's "drastic cultural loneliness" and the hard-earned unity of his work. Far from being blind and willful, he was a visionary, ahead of his time.

The figure that emerges from Lewis' pages is therefore less "bedeviled," violent, and incoherent than the one usually drawn. Lewis does not minimize the strife and skittishness of Crane's life, but shows that they were balanced by a spontaneous generosity of self-knowledge; Crane did not mutiny against reason. For the first time, Crane's poetic development is seen as an *orderly* efflorescence in distinct stages, not as random or beggarly seizures of inspiration. Crane had a remarkably self-generative and richly additive imagination which was released in his letters and poems; like Melville, he "habitually used words greatly."

Crane seldom abandoned his conviction that "the misapprehensiveness of his age is exactly what a poet is sent to remedy." (The phrase is Elizabeth Sewell's.) The poet singing his songs of Orpheus to an uncomprehending age may be torn apart by philistine maenads or simply scorned by the votaries of the old gods, but his function is exalted and indispensable, verging on prophecy: to minister to a "broken world" and hold out a vision of wholeness. Poetic vision is charitable—or in Emersonian terms, "affirmative, integrative, and transfiguring"—and Crane, as Lewis aptly remarks, instinctively leaned toward "the beatific and the restorative." "Poetry's task, for all of us," to quote Professor Sewell's *The Orphic Vision* again, "is to be not the nostalgic and complaining thing it has become in so many quarters as if the modern air did not suit its delicate constitution, but what it has always been meant to be, an instrument of immense power with a scarcely foreseeable but wholly positive future." Lewis argues that Crane becomes such a poet-hero of language, who, by means of his sacramental perceptions, "unlocks our chains."

[1] THE POETRY OF HART CRANE: A CRITICAL STUDY, by *R. W. B. Lewis.* Princeton University Press. $10.00.

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Crane's problem during the twenties was a stark one, and he read its terms with characteristic astuteness. Although he was nominally and technically a symbolist poet, the modernist temper was inhospitable to his "passion for yes," his Romantic style, and his conception of poetry as "an instrument of immense power." Crane's most influential adversary, T. S. Eliot, to whom he was beholden for his training in the craft of verse-making, was both nostalgic for the unity of a past culture that was frankly elitist, and disgusted by a present-day culture that was irreligious and empty. In its dry mockery, Eliot's poetry mourned the loss of the "seasons of belief"; hesitantly and tortuously he retreated into the shelter of the Church. For Eliot, it was Romantic pride and humanistic folly to think that man was self-sufficient and could replace a god dethroned from the skies, or, as Wallace Stevens has it, that the poet through his "dark, pacific words" could reconcile us to "the infinite incantations of ourselves/ In the grand decadence of the perished swan."

Crane, however, trusted poetry's power to do more than recite the burial service over the past and complain about the present. "I feel an absolute music in the air again, and some tremendous rondure floating somewhere," he wrote to Waldo Frank from the Isle of Pines in 1926, and this buoyant mood, with its poly-rhythmic harmonies, permeates his best verse. In wishing to "enter the broken world/ To trace the visionary company of love," and to make the scale of emotion more robust and animated, Crane belongs, and Lewis properly places him, in the anti-Puritanic, Romantic tradition of Blake, Emerson, Whitman, and Stevens. Eliot, sitting on the shore fishing, with the arid plain behind him, would find Crane's and Stevens' faith that the voyaging imagination could redeem a fallen world sheer delusion. Such a center Eliot was sure would not hold. For it conferred upon the poet an immunity to any external checks on his subjective voyages. What modern man had sundered—the system of belief and order—only God, not the imagination, could put together again.

"It was one of Crane's staunchest and most Emersonian convictions," Lewis contends, "that the orders of being—of man and God, the temporal and the timeless, the actual and the ideal—though calamitously dislocated within the modern consciousness, could again become contiguous one with another; exactly by being so envisioned in poetry." This statement of the actuating principle of much of Crane's verse enables us to discard the old shibboleth that Crane fluctuated between lurid carnality and ranting religiosity. Rather than being the "terrible puppet of [his] dreams," and a worshipper of the ideal who denied the actual, Crane made room for, indeed required, the presence of both in his poetry. "One had not only to *see* the actual in all of its fallen condition, but to see *through* it; to see an ideal condition in the same glance, and to see the actual thereby irradiated." Like Blake, Crane walked through the chartered

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city and saw the meagerness and restrictions of the American spirit in a "million brittle, bloodshot eyes"; but the death-haunted, eerie darkness of the tunnel is not final, does not extinguish the light of the bridge. The poet, through the lavish praise at his art's disposal, launches an "absolute music" into the American air. His "orphic strings" and "gleaming staves" announce the possibility, if not the birth, of a new religious consciousness.

The longest and finest section of Lewis' book is devoted to *The Bridge*. Where that poem has previously been read as a series of disconnected lyrics and dismissed as a formal botch because Crane tried to conscript the lyric for the epic's service, Lewis discovers in it the dramatic unfolding of the poet's and his culture's, "gain, loss, and partial recovery" of vision: "What *The Bridge* does reveal throughout is not a classical symmetry but an ebb and flow of consciousness and perception and emotion: a recurring movement rather than a carefully wrought design wherein each moment, each development, has its singular and inalterable place."

Despite Lewis' undoubted brilliance in prying open for us many of Crane's sealed and perplexing images, with their "excess of insinuated meaning," his book has its faults. The cultural inventories and digressions, for example, sometimes have a too familiar and glib ring to them. It may seem quibbling to want banished from our current critical vocabulary such vague catch-all terms as "mythic apprehension of life," but they seem to me to interpose a barrier between the reader and the poem. Lewis does not always make clear whether he is using myth merely as a convenient shorthand for certain literary archetypes favored by the Romantic poets or as the poet's humanizing faculty to bring alive and unite us with all that lies outside the self. Furthermore, Lewis' desire to present Crane as a man "free of guilt" seems contradicted not only by Crane's many letters to friends such as Gorham Munson, Waldo Frank, and Tate, referring to his "multitudes of humiliations," but also by such poems as "Paraphrase, "Possessions," and "Recitative," whose tense slow rhythms and images of the divided self (as Lewis himself interprets them) bespeak the burdens of an "aberrant or promiscuous love."

In the end, these reservations do not mar a very useful book. For whether or not the reader accepts Lewis' conclusion that Crane is a major poet, he will share in the pleasures of the critic's wit battling against the verbal ingenuities of Crane's poems; and he will perhaps respond to the emotional directness and power celebrated in Romantic poetry. "He spoke for life," Lewis declares of Crane: these words would serve the poet as both epitaph and benediction.

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GEORGE DIMOCK

# The Best Yet: Lattimore's Odyssey

BROADLY SPEAKING, THERE ARE two ways to go about making a verse translation of a foreign poem. One way is to search for the native English verse-form which most nearly corresponds to the foreign one, and the other is to try to approximate the foreign form in English. At first sight, the first method seems the more promising. We may well feel that if Homer had been an Englishman he would have composed in blank verse, or if a Scotsman, perhaps in one of the ballad meters. These are recognized forms, whereas what is to guarantee that an English version of Greek dactylic hexameter will even sound like poetry, whether or not it conveys any idea of the Greek?

All that I can say is that Richmond Lattimore makes the second method work brilliantly, whether for Homeric or Hesiodic hexameters, or tragic and comic iambics, or the Greek lyric meters both simple and complicated. One advantage of not using traditional English forms is surely just that, that the traditional forms call up the wrong traditional associations. Though Homer is part of our heritage, he belongs to a world more remote in time and space than those which blank verse and the ballad suggest, and we probably ought to keep him there, in his Greek, non-English, poetic world. The attempt to approximate dactylic hexameter in English will at least insure that he doesn't sound too English. To that extent he will sound Greek.

In his renderings of the *Iliad,* and now of the *Odyssey,*[1] Richmond Lattimore both sounds Greek and writes a language which one knows instantly is poetry. How one knows, I cannot finally say, but all one has to do for the thing to be obvious is to pick up his book after reading in any one of the several accurate, tasteful, literate verse-translations by modern scholars which have appeared in the last few years. I remember saying to myself on such an occasion, "Thank God for the short syllables," and I remember Lattimore himself saying that the hardest part of translating Homer was getting enough English polysyllables into the line. Presumably this is necessary because the unaccented syllables in a polysyllable sound definitely unaccented, whereas it is extremely hard to keep the rhythm alive through a long succession of monosyllables. For example, out of its surroundings the following line from Lattimore himself would be almost totally obscure as to its meter:

> I would not let them all drink the dark blood at the same time.
> (*Od.* 11.232)

So perhaps polysyllables are part of it. Yet in another case it is by

[1] THE ODYSSEY OF HOMER, translated by *Richmond Lattimore.* Harper & Row. $8.95.

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shortening a polysyllable that Lattimore shows his superiority as a translator. We all know that Odysseus must travel until some one mistakes the oar he is carrying for a winnowing fan. A lovely dactylic fall, that: "winnowing fan"—or is it? Lattimore thinks not, and he sounds right:

and sáys you cárry a wínnow fán on your bríght shoúlder.
(*Od.* 11. 128)

"Winnow fan" is better than "winnowing fan" and thousands of such superiorities add up to one of the two chief reasons why I think Lattimore's version of the Odyssey is the best yet in English: he is a poet.

The stress-marks on the line last quoted are intended to show what form Lattimore has chosen as analogous to the Greek hexameter; it is a free six-beat line. It is not really very like the Greek. The Greek can be marched to (not waltzed to, though if we are not careful we are apt to read it that way). The relief and interest which Lattimore gets by free substitution of feet Homer gets in other ways, mainly by variety of phrasing within the rigid scheme. Still, both lines have six downbeats, and the length is to all intents and purposes the same. So well does Lattimore manage this identity both in his *Odyssey* and in his other translations that he is able to keep the rule, one line of English equals one line of Greek. Only those who have tried it know what a feat this is, and the gain in concision and force is remarkable.

To this modest extent, then, he approximates the shape and rhythm of the Greek, but we have implied that his chief advantage as a translator is that he is a poet. Now as everybody knows there is another contemporary version of the *Odyssey* about which one is apt to exclaim, "Why this is poetry!" and that is Robert Fitzgerald's. As it happens, he chose the other alternative, the traditional form, in this case blank verse. Whether or not that is the reason, I think the effect is not only one of reading what Homer would have written had he written blank verse, but even of what he would have written had he been Robert Fitzgerald. The images are Homer's, but every device of sound and diction seems devoted to telling us how Fitzgerald himself responds to them. It makes an excellent poem, full of feeling, but I do not think the feeling is Homer's.

Lattimore by contrast is almost always able to let the images speak for themselves, and this is his second great virtue as a translator. He is so good in this department because he strenuously observes his own rule, announced in the introduction to his *Iliad* (page 55): "I must try to avoid mistranslation, which would be caused by rating the word of my own choice ahead of the word which translates the Greek." The few cases where he seems to slip—and it is inevitable that there should be slips in a poem of this length—are thus instructive both of what the ideal translator must avoid and of Lattimore's excellence the rest of the time.

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One such case occurs when the old nurse, Eurykleia, surveys the carnage inflicted on the guilty suitors:

> She, when she saw the dead men and the endless blood, began then to raise the cry of triumph, having seen it was monstrous work, but Odysseus checked her. . . .
>
> (22. 407-9)

The Greek word here translated "monstrous" simply means "big." It is true that the phrase μέγα ἔργον is often used of murder. Nestor uses it so of Agamemnon's murder in the third book, and there, where the speaker is indignant, the translation "monstrous" is proper. But here, only Lattimore is indignant, for Eurykleia is triumphant and Odysseus, though he feels a certain humility, feels no disgust. For him and for Homer this is an act of justice, not a murder. Lattimore on the other hand both calls it a murder in his introduction and writes as though Homer were somewhat embarrassed that the traditional plot had forced this *dénouement* on him (4-5). I find it hard to believe that Homer ever allowed his material to embarrass him for long, and I do not suppose he would have had Telemachos improve on his father's suggestions for dealing with the faithless maids unless he himself approved. Homer thought that revenge was a most important and useful human activity, that it both fulfilled the self and discouraged evil. Perhaps we know better now, but that is no reason to rewrite Homer.

Homer and Lattimore also disagree about war. Zeus's aegis, that mysterious, tasseled object the shaking of which by god or goddess over the lines of battle inspires now the spirit of attack and now panic flight, has for its stock epithet φθισίμβροτον, "man-destroying." Lattimore translates,

> And now Athene waved the aegis, that blights humanity . . .
>
> (22.297)

—which is rather different. Again, the death predicted for Odysseus is to be ἀβληχρός, a word meaning "soft" or "weak," which, with its variant βληχρός, is applied to things as various as Aphrodite's hand, walls, winds, and the rivers of Hades. Lattimore translates,

> Death will come to me from the sea, in some altogether *unwarlike* way . . . .
>
> (23. 281-2)

This is almost surely over-translated.

I will cite one more case in the same vein because it is rather elaborately wrong. The character in the poem whose philosophy comes nearest to Lattimore's is Eumaios, and it is perhaps natural that the translation embraces this sympathy too enthusiastically. Eumaios is astounded at the insouciance with which the suitors

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pursue their dangerous course, risking first and foremost divine retribution. He says,

> Eat now, stranger, what we serving men are permitted
> to eat: young pigs, but the fattened swine are devoured by the suitors,
> who think not at all in their minds of *judgment to come,* or of pity.
> The blessed gods have no love for violent actions,
> but rather they reward justice, and what men do that is lawful.
> Even *enemy and hostile* men, who land on an alien
> shore, and Zeus grants them spoil and plunder, and they load
> their ships with it and set out for home—even upon
> the minds of these *the strong fear falls of the wrath to come.*
> But the suitors have heard some god-sent rumor, and they know
> about the dismal death of our man, and *therefore* will not decently
> make their suit . . . .
>
> (14. 80-91)

Lattimore gives quite a different effect (though I have him to thank for most of my version):

> Eat now, stranger, what we serving men are permitted
> to eat: young pigs, but the fatted swine are devoured by the suitors,
> who have *no regard for anyone* in their minds, no pity.
> The blessed gods have no love for a pitiless action,
> but rather they reward justice and what men do that is lawful;
> and though those are *hateful and lawless men* who land on an alien
> shore, and Zeus grants them spoil and plunder, when they have loaded
> their ships with it they set sail for home, for even
> in the minds of these there is stored some fear, *which is stronger than pity;*
> but these, you see, have heard some god-sent rumor, and they know
> about the dismal death of our man, and they will not decently
> make their suit . . . .

This won't work. The chief points are, first that ὄπις in Homer means not "regard for others" and certainly not anything like "pity," but rather the gods' "attention" to crime; second, κρατερός so far as Liddell and Scott and I know never means "stronger" in Greek, only "strong." Therefore ὄπιδος κρατερὸν δέος cannot mean "fear which is stronger than pity"; it must mean "strong fear of the wrath to come," and this in turn will have its effect on the whole passage, particularly on the third line. Similarly, δυσμενέες καὶ ἀνάρσιοι is much closer to "enemy and hostile" than it is to "hateful and lawless." Lattimore elsewhere translates δυσμενής as "enemy." Here, in his enthusiasm at the mention of pity in this in some respects rather

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pitiless poem, he has obscured a number of points. Eumaios is so god-fearing that he can only understand the suitors' behavior as the result of a "god-sent rumor," a divine revelation to them that Odysseus is lost. Therefore he is the more convinced that Odysseus will never return, and even that the gods hated him (14. 366). Why they should do so, he suggests in the present passage. Odysseus has been an "enemy and hostile man" who landed on an alien shore, and Zeus gave him plunder. This is felt to be risky business, and indeed the poem as Lattimore himself notices (11) is full of the notion that the Achaians fell under heaven's wrath as the aftermath of Troy. The demonstration would be complete if Odysseus were really lost, as Eumaios thinks; but all the time, even as he makes these formulations, Odysseus is present before him, alive, well, and about to triumph, the living refutation of heaven's hostility to warriors, at least to warriors like him.

So the final comment on this excellent translation perhaps should be that sometimes when Lattimore stops to reflect, he finds it hard to accept the *Odyssey* for what it is; that is, in part, a defense of the predatory side of life. For all but a minimal part of the time, however, he keeps to his rule, preferring to his own word the word that translates the Greek. No one does this more beautifully.

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DAVID MAYBURY-LEWIS

# Science By Association

LÉVI-STRAUSS HAS, ALMOST OVERNIGHT, become an institution. In France he is widely and appropriately regarded as the antithesis to Sartre's thesis. Intellectual journals throughout the world have broken out in a rash of symposia devoted to his ideas, occasionally interspersed with highbrow press conferences, bearing titles such as conversations with (or *entretiens avec*) Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Newsweek* celebrated the English translation of *La Pensée Sauvage*[1] with a full-page article, which was followed at a predictable and deceptively nonchalant interval by the apotheosis of an essay in *Time*. Clearly structuralism is "in." But what is all the fuss about? The excitement has, after all, been caused by some highly technical books in social anthropology, a discipline whose findings do not normally hit the headlines.

The idea behind structuralism is basically very simple. Its essence is an insistence on formal analysis which aims to produce explanatory models of social system. Lévi-Strauss, taking his cue from Saussure and the structural linguists of the 1930's, set out years ago to uncover the grammar and syntax of human societies. In his classic work on the elementary structures of kinship,[2] published in 1949, he argued that the marriage systems of certain kinds of society could be viewed as communication systems in which women (amongst other things) were messages. This was perhaps only a variation on the old idea that any social system could be treated as a system of exchange, but Lévi-Strauss took the argument much further. These particular exchange systems, he suggested, were not only codes, but they were homologous with other codes in the same societies. Marriage arrangements might be shown to have the same structure as the distribution of meat from a slaughtered animal, the services performed by a barber, or a people's beliefs about life after death. They "said" the same thing in the idiom of the society in question. The job of the social anthropologist was therefore to find out what a society was trying, either consciously or unconsciously, to "say."

This, very baldly stated, has been the leitmotiv of Lévi-Strauss' work. From marriage systems he turned to the societies of Central Brazil, where he had himself done field work, and suggested how the "language" of their institutional and intellectual arrangements could be interpreted. He followed this up with a book on totemism,[3] in which he argued that the widespread custom of associating a human

[1] THE SAVAGE MIND, by *Claude Lévi-Strauss*. University of Chicago. $5.95.
[2] *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Presses universitaires de France, 1949).
[3] *Totemism*, translated by Rodney Needham (Beacon, 1963).

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group with some non-human emblem or totem should be understood as a classificatory procedure. So, in a society where different clans recognize different animal species as their totems, this can be taken as a symbolic statement to the effect that one clan is to another as one species is to another, i.e. discrete. However, the actual nature of the relationships expressed in such symbolic statements can only be grasped when the complete system of classification and the nature of the analogy between the natural series (in this case the animal species) and the social series (in this case the clans) has been understood. Hence the study of totemism is only a particular branch of the study of human systems of classification and it is this grand theme which is treated in *The Savage Mind.*

Lévi-Strauss starts off by demolishing the comfortable assumption that a wide gulf, or indeed a gulf of any sort, separates primitive thought from the thinking of civilized people (by which we normally mean ourselves, whoever we are). Anthropologists have demonstrated beyond question that peoples possessing only a rudimentary technology may nevertheless have a thorough, systematic and detailed knowledge of their environment in all its aspects. Nineteenth-century scholars were inclined to believe that such primitive science was a fluke, acquired either accidentally or as a by-product of simple technical activities, pursued in a "follow-your-nose" spirit. In fact Sartre resuscitated just such arguments in his *Critique de la Raison Dialectique.* Lévi-Strauss will not accept them. Instead, he forces us to admit that such knowledge must have been acquired as a result of minute observation, combined with genuine speculative interest. This speculation seeks order at all costs. More than that, it postulates a total system of connections in which everything in the universe has its place. In *The Savage Mind* Lévi-Strauss unravels the logic behind such systems and, in so doing, presents us with an argument about the nature of all human thinking. Savages are clearly not the only ones given to savage thought. It is simply a mode of thinking which can be found anywhere and at any time. It proceeds as logically as our own "scientific" thought and obeys the same laws. It is the terms of this savage thought which differ. It tends to be expressed in concrete statements which refer to special characteristics of plants, animals, stars, topography, weather, human society, a whole host of things drawn at random from the inventory of a society's concepts. It is thus impossible to predict which features a society will choose as vehicles for its thought and often hard to understand why it has selected those which it uses. One can only seek to decipher its code, to grasp the associations of those special features which give symbolic meaning to the statements in which they occur, and in this way to understand the system of categories which make up its way of thinking.

Lévi-Strauss does this with an argumentative subtlety and stylistic

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elegance which have dazzled his colleagues and brought critics to the verge of ecstasy. His own thought makes breathtaking associative leaps, so that reading him is an exciting experience even for the most skeptical. Here surely is the secret of the strange fascination which structuralism exercises over anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike. Lévi-Strauss can perceive connections where none were thought to exist. He can produce order where we had resigned ourselves to chaos, and we are suitably grateful.

Has the analysis of myth got bogged down? Lévi-Strauss gives it a new direction by insisting that myths do not try to explain natural phenomena, but rather use natural phenomena as a medium of explanation, as they try to resolve the contradictions with which man is inevitably faced. Have anthropologists discussed totemism so exhaustively that they hardly know what it means anymore? Lévi-Strauss provides a formulation which enables them to see that someone who makes a statement like "I am a wallaby" is not necessarily feeble-minded or possessed of a prelogical mentality. Nor does he stop there. Totemic societies have traditionally been thought of as radically different from societies with caste systems. In the first, a man who is wallaby may not marry a woman who is wallaby, but must seek a wife from another totemic group. The essence of the second is that a man must marry within his caste. Lévi-Strauss argues that, formally speaking, these two codes represent similar but inverse solutions to a social problem; that they can be, and have in the past actually been transformed into each other. In the one system, castes are heterogenous. They specialize in certain services which they perform for each other. In such a system women are therefore decreed to be heterogenous too and cannot be interchanged between castes. On the other hand, in a totemic system the constituent groups do not really perform services for each other, although they may pretend to, for example by performing rites to ensure the abundance of their own species of game animal. Women are therefore decreed to be interchangeable and are in fact exchanged between groups. Castes and totemic groups are thus two means of effecting social integration based on reciprocal services, although they appear to be entirely different social languages.

Later he takes the argument in a different direction. Totemism, he suggests, is not only a way of thinking, it is also an etiology. Totemic societies explain themselves in terms of a *Weltanschauung* which incorporates change into itself while remaining ostensibly immutable. They are in sharp contrast to those societies which admit the notion of flux as part of their self-image and therefore explain themselves by history. This accounts for what Lévi-Strauss calls the "totemic void," the fact that the great civilizations of Europe and Asia show little trace of totemic institutions, for explanations by classification and explanations through history are mutually exclusive. Of course,

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he concedes, all societies are processes. This does not mean however that they are all equally seen to be so by their own members.

This leads him into a final peroration, in which he takes issue with Sartre not only over the possibility of distinguishing between primitive and civilized thinking, but also over the privileged position which Sartre and others tend to accord to historical explanations in social science. He argues devastatingly that historical statements about process are no less inferential, though they are often thought to be so, than sociological ones. However one cannot help feeling that this critique of Sartre has been put in as a final chapter less because it winds up the argument of the book than because this was a convenient and not too irrelevant place for Lévi-Strauss to go another round with his opponent for the benefit of the Parisian intelligentsia.

Here we come to the heart of the problem. How does one really evaluate a book like *The Savage Mind,* which is trying to do so many things at once? One does not do it justice by enumerating its major themes, for its arguments are too numerous and varied. Besides the peculiar flavour of the book derives from the erudite range of its examples and its striking analogies. Savage thought is compared to the lace collar in a Clouet painting, while the paintings of Central Australian aborigines are like the mannered water-colours done by old maids (for they are both snobs). In fact Lévi-Strauss' thought is as richly and unpredictably associative as that of the societies which he discusses. After a while one gets used to it. When he tells us that the ideas of a given people remind us at once of . . . one braces oneself for an analogy so recondite that it may take considerable acrostic ability to perceive its relevance. And then there are the epigrammatic inversions so characteristic of his style. Of caste systems and totemic societies he says for example: ". . . castes naturalize a true culture falsely, totemic groups culturalize a false nature truly." (p. 127)

The total effect of his writing is so pregnant and elliptical that it is frequently difficult to discover what he means to say. No wonder the translation of *La Pensée Sauvage* led to such divergences between author, editors and translator that the translator's name has (at her request) been removed from the book. The fact of the matter is that Lévi-Strauss is often hard to follow, not because of the complexity of his thought, but because of the baroque ambiguities of his style. This places his critics in an invidious position. It may seem churlish to ask what he means when he has said it so memorably, and the people who do so are often thought of as spoil-sports. Yet the question must be asked.

The elegant prose glides easily over unargued assumptions, inconvenient evidence and the occasional contradiction. Totemism, we are told, is a system of classification. Later it is assumed to be a system where totemic groups exchange women. But all totemic societies do not prohibit marriage between people of the same totem, or even

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confine totems to single social groupings, as Lévi-Strauss himself recognizes elsewhere in his book (p. 125). Totemism and historical explanations are held to be antithetical, yet they appear to co-exist in Africa. Even if we accept that what we have hitherto called totemism is nothing but a special type of classificatory procedure, this does not tell us why some people feel their totems are sacred, others feel that they are inedible and others feel that they are nothing in particular. This is, of course, a problem of a different order and it would be foolish to reproach Lévi-Strauss for not doing what he never intended to. But his grand synthesis does seem on occasion to be not very illuminating.

Take for example the discussion of names which is central to *The Savage Mind*. He is provocatively witty about the naming of birds, dogs, cats and racehorses, but when it comes to humans his elaborate discussions and lengthy formalizations boil down to the suggestion that names classify people. This observation is immensely significant for some societies (the ones from which Lévi-Strauss draws his examples) where names form a well-defined system into which the named person is introduced. For the majority of human societies however the proposition is only true in the formal sense that to name something is to assign it to some sort of class. It may be suggestive to call this "treating individuation as classification" but the notion does not really lead anywhere when we come to consider the functions of names in an alien society, unless of course it happens to be one of the special type from which Lévi-Strauss generalizes.

I find all this a little disturbing. Lévi-Strauss appears to take unwarranted liberties with his evidence. He sacrifices precision of expression to verbal pyrotechnics, and when the display is over, it is not always clear what can be done with his grandiose theoretical constructs. Not only does he spin metatheories but he expresses them in metaphors, and one cannot help noticing that when he comes down from the clouds and deals with specific cases, he is often trivial or just plain wrong. But it is unreasonable to expect anybody to be always theoretically brilliant, or even regularly right. It is undeniable that some of Lévi-Strauss' insights have done precisely what we expect of structuralism, helped us to see things in a new way. In this respect they have been revolutionary. Furthermore there are few people who write as stimulatingly as he does about Man. If I continue, then, to wonder ungratefully whether or not he is right, that after all is my job as an anthropologist.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

# Idaho Then and Now

BETWEEN COLONEL BROWN'S HISTORY of the Nez Percé war and Edward Dorn's impressionistic account of a journey through Idaho, Utah and Nevada,[1] the surrender speech of Chief Joseph might stand as the midway point, the point where greed, resentment, heroism and tangled good intentions issued in tragedy:

> "Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Looking Glass is dead. Too-hool-hool-zote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; not one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever."

The speech is a famous one. Transcribed from General Howard's official report of the conclusion of an episode that cost the Indians everything they owned, its bare rhetoric ("this touching little speech" Colonel Brown rather ineptly calls it) survives translation, as does that feeling of a whole culture in and behind its orator's stance. According to H. J. Spinden's *The Nez Percé Indians,* the Nez Percé inhabited a world of extreme ceremonial simplicity, despite which oratory was a highly developed art among them, "for on this depended much of the power and prestige of the chiefs". This culture of language shows again in Smohalla's speech. He was the founder of the Dreamer Religion, a religion which curiously irked the evangelical General Howard, and which, with its opposition to violating the earthmother through agriculture, afforded ammunition to those "enterprising settlers" who knew that land was made for use—and only for use. Smohalla voices all that was incomprehensible to the gold and land seekers who invaded the Nez Percé reservation:

> "My young men shall never work. Men who work cannot dream, and wisdom comes in dreams.
>
> You ask me to plow the ground. Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's breast? Then when I die she will not take me to her bosom to rest.
>
> You ask me to dig for stone. Shall I dig under her skin for

[1] THE FLIGHT OF THE NEZ PERCE, by *Mark H. Brown.* Putnam. $8.95. THE SHOSHONEANS, by *Edward Dorn;* photographs by *Leroy Lucas.* Morrow. $6.95.

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bones? Then when I die I cannot enter her body to be born again. . . .

It is a bad law, and my people cannot obey it. I want my people to stay with me here. All the dead men will come to life again. We must wait here in the house of our fathers and be ready to meet them in the body of our mother."[2]

Even those of the best intentions, those like John B. Monteith, the Agent on the Nez Percé reservation, knew what the Indians *ought* to feel about their lands. Monteith tried to force Joseph to settle and take up farming and explained in his report to the Commissioner: "They said that they did not want the [Wallawa] valley for farming purposes, but for that of hunting and fishing. I replied that that was not sufficient, that the Government expected more of them. Still they refused . . . I am of the opinion that Joseph and his band are not entitled to the Wallowa unless they go there and settle down."

Now, Monteith was no villian—quite the contrary: he stood in decided and rational opposition to those "human parasites of varying degrees of undesirability" (Col. Brown's words) who sought to make the Indians' territory their own. But Monteith clearly corroborates what Mr. Dorn says, later inspecting the remnants of a once powerful culture—namely that the Indian will only be accepted into the white world by surrendering his ethnic identity. The "best" men like Monteith have often been superseded by glib college graduates who chatter about "Integration through Education": but it all means the one thing—give up being what you are and join the middle class (if you can make it). On one hand comes "Integration through Education" from the sloganising mouths of the radically ineducable, on another the kind of thing represented by the prose of a recent information sheet from Fort Hall Agency, Idaho: "Indians who are now principally on the reservation were the aboriginal owners of the entire United States. Placing them on reservations was an act to protect the white settlers from acts of depredation, which became more common as the Indians were pushed further back out of their original holdings."

Chief Joseph's words, as reported in 1879 in the *North American Review,* provide a touchstone for this matter. We cannot, says Colonel Brown, accept them as a verbatim statement, but the dignity of their logic arrests us as standing close to Joseph's original testimony:

"If we ever owned the land we own it still, for we never sold it. In the treaty councils the commissioners have claimed that our country had been sold to the Government. Suppose a white man should come to me and say, 'Joseph, I like your horses, and I want to buy them.' I say to him, 'No, my horses suit me, I will not sell them.' Then he goes to my neighbor, and says to him: 'Joseph has some good horses. I want to buy them, but he refuses to sell.' My neighbor answers, 'Pay me the money, and I will sell you Joseph's

[2] This, and other Indian texts, can be found excerpted in Margot Astrov's *American Indian Prose and Poetry* (Capricorn Books).

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horses.' The white man returns to me and says, 'Joseph, I have bought your horses, and you must let me have them.' If we sold our land to the Government, this is the way they were bought."

The tragedy of the Nez Percé went back in part to the division of the tribe into factions and the arbitrary appointment by white power of a "head chief" over-ruling the council which had formerly decided tribal affairs. The full purport of Joseph's words refers to this event and to the fact that James Lawyer, the Government-designated head chief, had initially agreed to a vast reduction of the Nez Percé reservation—a reduction which bartered away the lands of the unrepresented faction to which Joseph belonged. Colonel Brown traces the development of the war in great detail. Despite a certain amount of military muscle-flexing at the beginning, and despite the abominable dime-novel chapter heads ("The Curse of Gold," "The Die Is Cast," "Death at Dawn"), the account is sober and judicious. Two points emerge which invite reflection. The first is the degree to which the use of whiskey flared into crises that made this destructive war inevitable. At the end of the affair Thomas A. Sutherland wrote an excellent dispatch about Joseph for the San Francisco *Chronicle* in which we read: "He is a temperate man and says that captured whiskey was usually at the bottom of all murders, the Indians getting almost crazy with it and utterly beyond his influence." The measure of Chief Joseph's control is the second point to be noted. For Colonel Brown presents him as being far less central to the story than tradition would have it, and occupying a situation in which the tribal council dominated until, by a process of elimination involving the deaths of other principal members, he found himself in a prominent position during the peace negotiations and only after the disastrous final flight of the Nez Percé. "Thus," concludes Brown "on October 1, 1877, the legend that Joseph was *the* great chief of this faction, *the* mighty leader in battle, and *the* clever strategist seems to have been born. Unquestionably, Joseph was a towering figure; and had he possessed the degree of authority the 'Joseph legend' has ascribed to him this futile flight would probably have ended at Kamiah on the morning of July 16th. Unfortunately, the governing body was a tribal council dominated by Looking Glass, White Bird and Too-hool-hool-zote."

Mr. Dorn's interesting *The Shoshoneans* is less systematic in approach. It contains a number of memorable pictures by Leroy Lucas, a Negro photographer who accompanied Dorn through the three western states, and relies for its power on a *montage* of fact, narrative and moral enquiry. Some of the best stretches of the book, reminiscent of Mr. Dorn's *Rites of Passage,* evoke those terrible desert towns, Lovelock and Reno. In gambling Reno "it is on the intensely obsessed faces of the California women, sometimes working three machines at once, that you settle. They never tire, long after all reasonable workers, prostitutes and dishwashers, have gone to bed, at five o'clock in the morning they are swaying before the machines, pulling, pulling."

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An ambitious first chapter, describing a meeting with Willie Dorsey, a Shosoni one hundred and two years old, gets over-solemn and goes adrift into a proliferating spatter of first persons singular. (As Mr. Dorn so well puts it: "Whenever any non-Indian citizen presumes to speak to or about Indians, there is in his mouth a rather heavy inheritance of qualifying history. . . .") A difficult book to assess, its difficulties arise from moments where there is loss of focus. We never quite know, for example, what Dorn thinks finally of Shosoni religion culminating in the Sun Dance so excellently photographed by Leroy Lucas. At one point we are told (p. 53) that an Indian's religion cannot be much these days. At the close, when Leroy Lucas has participated in the Sun Dance, having undergone the accompanying ascetic desciplines, we read: "There was a subtle clarity and calm which permeated his being." Can such qualities come of something "not much these days"? This is one of the most problematic stretches of the book and Mr. Dorn, rightly determined, perhaps, to give us no tourist stuff, leaves us with a chronic blank: "I was away at the time of the dances, late July, and when I returned to Pocatello, Leroy had just been through it." To supply his absence there are the lovely photographs, but what *precisely* is happening in them we are not told.

Mr. Dorn's conclusion is extremely well-chosen and consists of a speech by Clyde Warrior, a leader of the Indian youth movement in the Southwest. This speech, Mr. Dorn tells us, he was prevented from giving to a conference of the "War on Poverty" program. At the heart of it stands the following:

> "In the old days the Ponca people lived on the buffalo and we went out and hunted it. We believe that God gave the buffalo as a gift to us. That alone did not erode our character, but no one went out and found the buffalo for us and no one organized our hunts for us, nor told us how to divide our meats, nor told us how to direct our prayers. We did that ourselves. And we felt ourselves to be a competent, worthy people. In those days we were not 'out of the system.' We were the system, and we dealt competently with our environment because we had the power to do so. White businessmen and bureaucrats did not make the Ponca decisions, the Poncas made those decisions and carried them out. If we were rich one year, it was our doing and if we were poor the next, we felt competent to deal with that condition. Democracy is just not good in the abstract, it is necessary for the human condition; and the epitome of democracy is responsibility as individuals and as communities of people. There can not be responsibility unless people can make decisions and stand by them or fall by them."

One hears through Clyde Warrior's words something of that human solidity and self-possessed restraint that marked those of Joseph and Smohalla. Will he—for the best possible reasons—be cheated of his inheritance as they were?

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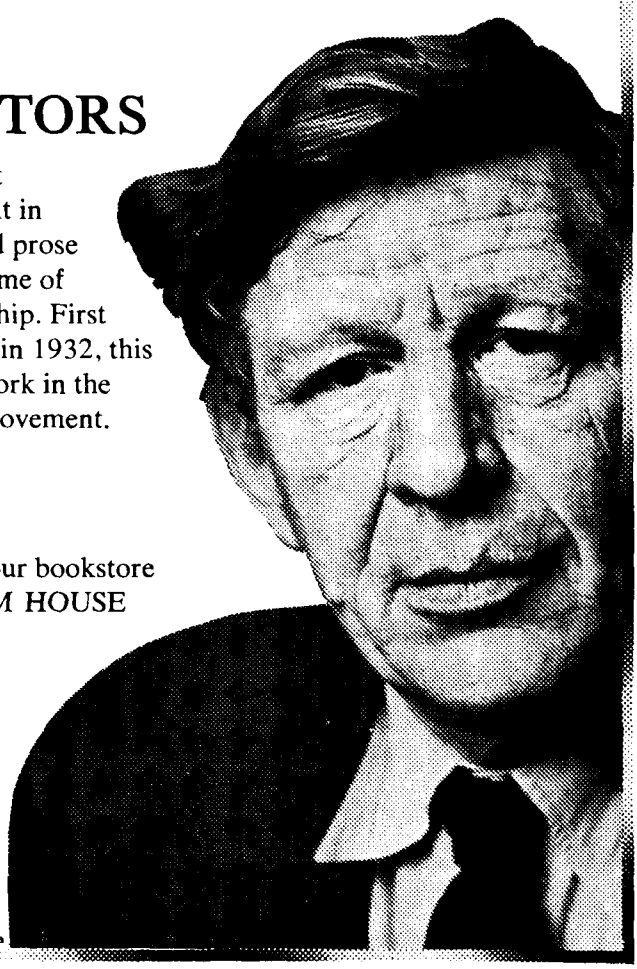

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